




atla  **Summary of
Proceedings**


Seventy-eighth
Annual Conference
of Atla

James A. Estes
EDITOR



JUNE 19-22, 2024 • LONG BEACH, CA
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200 S. Wacker Drive
Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60606-6701
connect@atla.com
PRINT ISSN 0066-0868
ONLINE ISSN 2769-2027

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

From June 19 to 22, 2024, the 78th annual meeting of Atla convened in Long Beach, California, where Atla members, staff, friends, and colleagues met for professional development and for fellowship. We learned about each other's ongoing work and planned for the future. We created and renewed friendships, and we gamed. Yes, we gamed! (Shout-out to *Wanderhome!*)

This volume is the product of that gathering. The *Summary of Proceedings* chronicles the activities at Atla Annual, documents the association's ongoing activities and interests, and makes available the research, best practices, and professional wisdom shared at that meeting. The *Summary of Proceedings* also serves as a barometer of sorts: A glance at any volume can reveal what dominated our association's attention in any given year. With this in mind, we can look at this year's papers to discern the topics, trends or technologies that dominated Atla's attention. While a couple of common themes do stand out—which we'll consider momentarily—the range of topics addressed by Atla Annual can defy easy collation. This year's papers range in topic from license negotiation to information literacy to gender diversity to *creatio divina*. Atla's professional interests, like its members, are diverse.

In addition, this year's volume offers readers a unique opportunity to engage with Atla Annual's plenary speakers. Dr. Amir Hussain (our opening plenary speaker) and Dr. Lynn Silipigni Connaway (our closing plenary speaker) generously gave Atla time for interviews that allow us to better explore their professional insights and perspectives.

Nonetheless, two themes surface that invite attention. The first addresses curating, maintaining, and downsizing physical collections. This is a perennial concern as libraries everywhere must contend with the challenge of evaluating and maintaining collections while people, programs, and resources vie for space. Papers from Beth Kumar, David Kiger, and Oliver Schulz share lessons learned from their institutions' respective discard and curation projects. This does not suggest that physical books have lost value for our collections,

however: Karl Stutzman reminds us that print collections continue to have significance, and Brandon Wason discusses the importance of physical books as cultural and historical artifacts. Hannie Riley further teaches that library discards can still have life and meaning for Majority World libraries.

Certainly, one theme clearly stood out as having captured Atla's attention, and it is no surprise: artificial intelligence (AI) was the dominant topic of conversation, as five papers (and a total of nine presenters) wrestled with the concerns raised by AI for librarians and for higher education. Michael Hanegan offered theological librarians an invitation to serve as leaders in responding meaningfully to the challenges and potential of AI in education. A panel conversation with Brady Alan Beard, Allison Graham, Emily Peterson, and David Edward Schmersal examined the nature of AI in contemporary teaching and scholarship and counseled a path of thoughtful engagement with AI in order to best serve our communities. Dyan Barbeau and Kathy Harty described their library's commitment to working with theological faculty to better understand AI and develop relevant pedagogical strategies for it. Finally, we get into the weeds of using AI: Steve Jung introduced strategies for crafting AI prompts, while Nathan Ericson related his exploration of using AI for developing a digital edition of an early sixteenth-century astrological treatise. (*Sic itur ad astra!*) This constellation of papers serves as a fascinating and instructive introduction to AI in academic librarianship, and provides a valuable opportunity to learn more about AI in theological education.

This year's *Summary of Proceedings* is ultimately like many previous years' volumes: the contents are both timely and timeless, both addressing perennial questions and responding to new urgencies. I invite you to browse the contents and learn about the work of your colleagues; these papers might provide new insights for problems you already face, raise concerns you had not considered—or even inspire you to think in areas that you feel demand more research and discussion.

I'd like to close this editorial introduction with a few words of gratitude for the many people who made this volume possible: to the presenters and authors whose words grace these pages, and whose patience, professionalism, and collegiality made it possible to bring

their work to a broader audience; and to our plenary speakers, for their time before, during, and after Atla Annual. Finally, no small amount of gratitude is due to Barnaby Hughes at Atla. His work was instrumental in refining and sharpening these papers. (Never edit alone!)

And thank you, readers, for bringing your attention to Atla's work and the *Summary of Proceedings*.

Take, and read!

James A. Estes
Editor-in-Chief

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BUSINESS REPORTS

Minutes of the Atla Business Meeting

Thursday, June 20, 2024

Beth Kumar, Graduate Theological Union, Atla Board Secretary

President Jérémie LeBlanc convened the meeting at 12:59 p.m. US Pacific Daylight Time. A quorum was declared and LeBlanc reviewed the voting procedure.

Secretary Kumar reported that members of the 2024 Teller's Committee were Maria Garcia (chair), Ryan Shrauner, and Suzanne Smith. The Teller's Committee received the election results via email from Survey & Ballot Systems and verified that 256 (or 40.19%) of the 637 eligible members cast valid ballots. The membership elected—as given here in alphabetical order—Bo Adams, Jessica Boyer, Vance Thomas, and Kris Veldheer to the board class of 2024–2027.

Michael Bradford moved that the membership accept the Secretary's Report. Kathy Harty seconded. The vote passed with zero opposed, zero abstentions.

President LeBlanc welcomed the new board members, and thanked the outgoing board members with plaques. He thanked 2023–2024 board officers. President LeBlanc announced the board officers for 2024–2025 are Susan Ebertz as President, Karl Stutzman as Vice President, Beth Kumar as Secretary, and Kris Veldheer as Treasurer. LeBlanc gave words of thanks for his time as president and invited incoming President Ebertz to the stage. LeBlanc passed the gavel to Ebertz and she presented him with a plaque.

Kris Veldheer moved to adjourn the business meeting. Amy Limpitlaw seconded. The vote passed with zero opposed, zero abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 1:14 p.m. US Pacific Daylight Time.

2024 Association Update

John F. Kutsko, Executive Director

In 2018, I taught a dissertation writing workshop at the Alex Haley Farm, formerly owned by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Roots*. The restored farm in Clinton, Tennessee, is now owned by the Children’s Defense Fund. It’s a training center and space for spiritual renewal. I wasn’t prepared for the unexpected emotion I felt when I drove up to the gatehouse, and a gentle person invited me in with the words, “Welcome home.” I had never been there before, but it felt both welcoming and homey.

The annual gatherings of associations like ours have typically been a chance to reconnect—a family reunion. That has very much characterized the Atla Annual conference. Like everything, it has changed over time: smaller these past years, and an online experience for many. But an intentional time and gathering for mutual support is indispensable. I hope you experience some reunion in person or online. So let me begin by saying, “Welcome home.”

This association update, like the meeting itself, is hybrid: Atla has a fiscal year, a calendar year, and an annual cycle marked by Board terms, which coincides with this meeting. My report on the state of Atla’s finances is for the last fiscal year’s audit, that is, the year ending nine months ago (i.e., August 31, 2023). But I will also provide program and product highlights from the past year and look ahead to next year’s initiatives for 2024–2025.

It is not possible to adequately convey the business and administrative details, the development of the databases, the Open Press publishing, and association programs and services in the few minutes I have for the update. Atla is 24/7. So, I encourage you to read the Annual Reports, weekly updates, monthly blogs, and regular announcements posted to [Atla.com](https://atla.com) and its socials—every week, all year long.

A few words of thanks. Now that I am into my second year, I’ve gotten to know many Atla members, and it confirms my first impression that theological librarianship is both a profession of wide-ranging expertise and a vocation of service and commitment—commitment

to students, faculty, institutions, and to the resources for information literacy that foster and preserve the study of religion and theology. Second, thanks to the Atla Board for supporting me. They serve at your pleasure, and I serve at theirs. Third, Atla is a membership organization, a public trust of its members and governed by its volunteers. Atla has 45 full-time staff, but these are the committees that govern and guide the organization:

- Board of Directors and Committees
 - Finance Committee
 - Governance Committee
 - Moral Ownership Committee
 - Nominating Committee
- Association Committees
 - Conference Committee
 - Conduct Committee
 - Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - Atla Open Press Advisory Council
 - Professional Development Committee
 - Scholarly Communication and Digital Initiatives Committee
 - CRRRA Program Committee
- Editorial Boards
 - Books@Atla Open Press
 - *Theological Librarianship*
 - *TCB: Technical Services in Religion and Theology*
- PCC (NACO/SACO/CONSER) Funnels

Thanks to everyone serving on them, and please consider that service for yourself.

THE STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION

The last fiscal year that ended August 31, 2023, was financially positive, and the state of the association is strong. The audited fiscal year 2023 financial statements from the independent audit are available online in the 2023–24 *Annual Report* (<https://www.atla.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024AtlaAnnualReport-1.pdf>) on pages 28–31.

The audited Statement of Financial Position reported the organization's total liabilities and net assets at year-end, as \$19,342,863, up \$1,077,501 from FY2022.

Actual revenue was \$8,229,018 against actual expenses of \$7,565,321, as shown on the Statement of Activities. This brings Atla's total net assets (sometimes called total net worth) to \$12,469,747—up \$663,697 from FY2022. This has been a positive fiscal year and a strong recovery from FY2022 to FY2023.

Current assets represent cash and investments and other assets that will likely be converted to or provide benefit similar to cash in the next 12 months. The current asset level is a gauge of liquidity and the organization's ability to meet its near-term obligations. Atla's current assets increased by \$560,267 from FY2022 to FY2023, giving Atla strong coverage to support its liabilities. In our current fiscal year, the assets in the unaudited FY2024Q2 financials total \$10,312,864, an increase of \$1,101,487 over the previous year. This continues our good cash flow position this year.

Atla's primary source of revenue (92%) continues to be royalties from the research tools we create (see figure 1). Income generated from Membership and Engagement activities (2%) include dues, conference fees, and fees for services such as hosting ejournals for other organizations. We are grateful to EBSCO and the relationships that support this partnership. Administration is a category that includes unrealized gains and losses from investments, and this year we've experienced unrealized gains.

FY2023 Results: How Revenue Is Earned

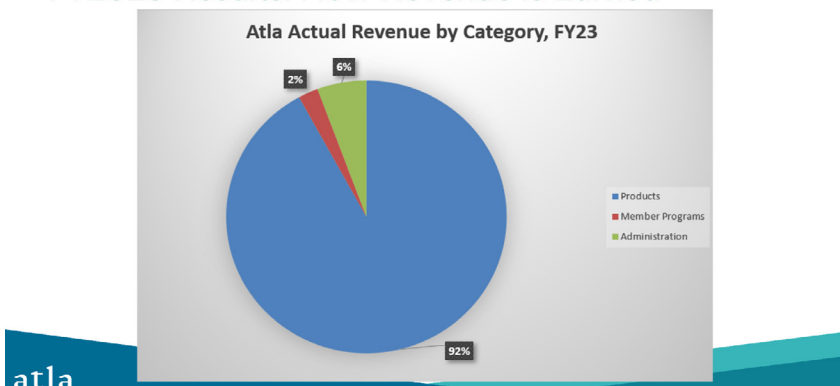


Figure 1: FY2023 Results: How revenue is earned

On the expense side, the largest portion (60%) was used to produce the Atla research tools we create and provide through EBSCO (see figure 2). However, a significant amount of Atla’s expenses—more than nine times the revenue—is focused on fulfilling the mission of the association. Last year this was 19%, which is also higher than the previous year. This includes funding committee work, open access publishing, Membership and Engagement staff, and professional development opportunities for our members, such as this conference and our webinar series. Board and governance work, as well as much of the administration costs, are also really the work of the organization’s ends.

FY2023 Results: How Revenue Is Spent

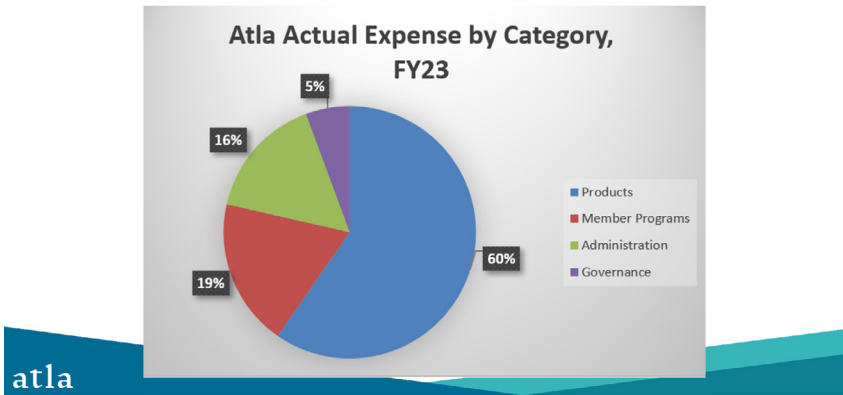


Figure 2: FY2023 Results: How revenue is spent

Total investment—including the endowment, operating reserve, and other non-endowed funds—grew from \$6,843,934 at May 2023 to \$7,854,138 at May 2024—that is, just over \$1,000,000 (see table 1). This growth is largely due to increases in market valuation of the holdings and realized investment income. Nevertheless, the allocations allowed now by the new investment policy have significantly helped.

Table 1: Total Investments

	MAY 31, 2024	MAY 31, 2023
16-1233 (OTHER NON-ENDOWED FUNDS)		
Cash Equivalents	\$2,648,656.62	\$1,651,263.61
Equities	-	\$1,291,666.06

Fixed Income	\$1,060,477.78	\$2,807,088.91
Alternatives	-	\$22,972.32
TOTAL FUND	\$3,709,134.40	\$5,772,990.90
16-1233A (ENDOWED FUNDS)		
Cash Equivalents	\$102,072.07	\$86,543.47
Equities	\$1,356,391.30	\$984,400.10
Fixed Income	-	-
Alternatives	-	-
TOTAL FUND	\$1,458,463.37	\$1,070,943.57
16-1233B (OPERATING RESERVE)		
Cash Equivalents	\$51,442.79	-
Equities	\$1,625,548.07	-
Fixed Income	\$982,421.66	-
Alternatives	\$27,127.80	-
TOTAL FUND	\$2,686,540.32	-
ALL FUNDS		
Cash Equivalents	\$2,802,171.48	\$1,737,807.08
Equities	\$2,981,939.37	\$2,276,066.16
Fixed Income	\$2,042,899.44	\$2,807,088.91
Alternatives	\$27,127.80	\$22,972.32
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$7,854,138.09	\$6,843,934.47

As of June, Atla has 742 members in 28 different countries. Membership is down in most categories from FY2023 to FY2024 as shown in table 2. This trend for peer library associations and learned societies, too, is not unique to Atla, but it is an issue for concern.

Table 2: Atla membership trends (FY2015–2024)

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24 YTD
INDIVIDUAL	367	377	368	346	330	336	350	367	382	341
LIFETIME	88	91	97	94						
RETIRED					22	24	25	18	19	17
EMERITUS					75	71	20	13	12	4
STUDENT	80	45	57	69	86	71	85	92	90	53
INSTITUTIONAL	234	239	263	285	294	292	291	301	304	306
AFFILIATE	62	61	47	32	23	22	23	23	13	9
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL	10	10								
TOTAL MEMBERS	843	828	832	826	830	816	794	814	820	730

THE IMPACT OF THE ASSOCIATION

If you've read my blogs, you will have seen that I have a sober and realistic view of the pressures we face in theological education at seminaries and divinity schools, and the study of religion at colleges and universities. But here is the thing: Religion is not a siloed field. It doesn't exist in a vacuum. It isn't supposed to be cloistered and studied in isolation from its comprehensive impact on lives, communities, culture, and society. How religion is studied may be variable, but the need for understanding it is constant. This fact plays to our strengths: an association providing community and professional development for theological librarians, and the tools your faculty and students need to study religion in its historical, interdisciplinary, and evolving ways.

You have also seen in my blogs a theme that I deeply believe in. It is about Atla's capacious future: *Religion is Everywhere*. Religion is Everywhere *in Society*. What an opportunity for the vital and essential role of theological librarianship and the resources we can provide any and every field!

With this message, in 2023 we began working closely with EBSCO's marketing team to demonstrate that the databases support the study of religion across a campus, not just in a department, and they serve theological education in the new ways students want to study it or to practice it—often outside congregational ministry.

Atlas PLUS® especially leads the way in providing a tool for students and faculty that is interdisciplinary, multilingual, and multireligious, that includes a diversity of perspectives and approaches. I hope you had the chance to read the June blog by Maria Stanton and the new horizons we reach with it. As Maria says, “comprehending the role of religion in shaping society is essential,” and Atla has a research tool for the “comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of religion in society” (<https://www.atla.com/blog/religion-society-atlas-journey-and-new-horizons/>). In other words, it’s now the database to study not just religion but religion *and* society. A tool like this deepens and broadens the role and context of the theological librarian, because you become the guides helping navigate the intersection of religion with a variety of disciplines and professions.

This year the Membership and Engagement staff implemented a new membership opportunity—membership bundling—and 67 institutions, or 22.3% of all institutional members, have chosen to take advantage of it so far. One of the goals of membership bundling was to increase the number of new individual members, and that seems to be succeeding, since 43 of the 109 individual members associated with a membership bundle (43%) are newly joined members. Other goals of bundling were to give Atla a clear line of communication to library staff who are not the official representative for a member institution, to increase the number of individuals receiving regular communications from Atla, and to help them benefit from Atla through grant and professional development programs they may not have been aware of.

In addition to these product and membership points of emphasis, I want to note some other accomplishments this year that involve both the Membership and Engagement team and Product Development and Production team, often working closely together: the launch of the Institutional Repository service, continued indexing and transcribing of Day1 sermons for the Christian Media Alliance, and both the support and integration into Atla of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance programing and its Catholic News Archive and Catholic Portal.

This year, too, to support our accountability to members on the impact staff is making to achieve the new Organizational Ends that the board approved, we distributed a survey in April. This survey was

the outgrowth of goals we set last year toward two efforts: one, provide data that inform Key Performance Indicators to hold ourselves accountable to what you, the members, want Atla to accomplish; and second, to work more closely with the board's Moral Ownership Committee to draft the questions so that we understand together what members need from Atla. This will become an annual survey, so that we can observe trends in our performance as well as new challenges and opportunities.

In addition to the member satisfaction survey, we are also collaborating with our international partners on a global demographic survey. This survey will support a study of religion and theology library trends. It is designed to help understand the environment in which theological libraries are functioning, and how librarianship is evolving to meet the changing landscape of theological education around the globe. This year we collaborated with ANZTLA in Australia and New Zealand, and BETH in Europe, to develop the study questions, and we will work together to analyze and report results on a global as well as regional level. Following the survey, we will work with In Trust to conduct focus groups in various parts of the world. We plan to widen the collaboration with more international library association peers next year, particularly in the Majority World.

THE FUTURE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Finally, along with the international survey and study, which points ahead to next year, I want to mention two more projects the Atla staff is focused on.

One is something I also mentioned last year and toward which we have made good progress. We are in the process of building an open and federated discovery platform that cross-searches a wide range of materials, including a significant number of open access resources, archives and special collections, and institutional histories. It will be a federated search solution designed to support theological education, interdisciplinary research, preaching, and teaching, and especially to make discoverable the at-risk and underrepresented histories that fully reflect the diversity of contributions in religion and theology on society. Stay tuned for more about this project.

Second, we are actively exploring new products that support the intersection of religion in professional areas. What appears to be most promising is a database for studying the rapidly growing field in which Religion and Spirituality intersect with Medicine and Healthcare Chaplaincy. We worked with a consultant on a case statement and proposal, and we are now in the fundraising stage for a planning grant to methodically determine the business case and market for such a resource. We are now budgeting for FY2025 (our fiscal year begins September 1), and both efforts I just mentioned are being built into it.

Thanks for your time and attention. Please feel free anytime to ask anything more about this year, our plans for next, or comments or concerns. I am at your service.

PLENARY

An Interview with Dr. Amir Hussain

Atla Annual 2024 Opening Plenary Speaker

Dr. Amir Hussain offered the opening plenary address at Atla Annual 2024. Dr. Hussain is Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He teaches religion and specializes in the study of Islam, focusing on contemporary Muslim societies in North America. He served as the president of the American Academy of Religion in 2023 and was the editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* from 2011–2015. Dr. Hussain co-edited the fourth edition of *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (2019) and the fifth editions of *World Religions: Western Traditions* (2018), and *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (2018). In 2016, he wrote *Muslims and the Making of America*, and contributed to *Oil and Water: Two Faiths, One God* (2006). He has published over 60 book chapters and scholarly articles about religion. For more information, visit <https://faculty.lmu.edu/amirhussain/>

Prior to Atla Annual, Atla’s Alex Leiseca spoke with Dr. Hussain about his experiences in the world of religion and theology. The following interview has been edited for clarity and length.¹

How did you decide to pursue the study of religion?

Oh, that’s a great question. I grew up working class, both my parents worked in factories and I was born in Pakistan but grew up in Canada. So all my education was in Canada, and if you asked me in high school, “What do you want to do with your life?” I would have said, “I want to be a doctor.” As a child of immigrants, you had three career options. You can be a doctor, you can be a lawyer, you can be

an engineer, or maybe a business owner. Maybe there's a fourth up, but that was it. And so you think, "Okay, I'm going to be a doctor, it's the smartest thing I could think of." You go to university. And within a week, there was this moment of "Wait, there's this category where you can get paid to read and write to have an office full of books?" You know, if you'd asked me in high school, "Do you want to be a teacher when you grow up?" I would have said, "Are you crazy?" because I was thinking of high school teachers, but when you go to university, it's a completely different world. And so it was like, "I want to do that. I want to be a professor. How do you become a professor? You need a PhD? What's a PhD?"

The course I liked the best was psychology. I went to the University of Toronto for all my degrees and at the time I think the University of Toronto had the largest English department in North America. And you had to take some English courses, so, my undergraduate degree is a psychology major with a minor in English. It was studying English literature that got me into the study of religion. I was fortunate to have extraordinary people there. Northrop Frye, the great Blake scholar, he taught Shakespeare, and he was working on a book that would become his book *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. If you want to read one book to understand Western culture, not just Western literature, but Western art, and Western music: it's the Bible. Shakespeare makes much more sense if you know the Bible, Blake makes much more sense if you know the Bible. I didn't know the Bible because I'm a Muslim. And so I was like, "Well, maybe I should take a course on the Bible." And then I'm thinking, "But I'm a Muslim, maybe I should take a course in my own religion and learn more about Islam." That was where I made that switch from the study of psychology because, I knew within the first week of school that I wanted to be professor, and originally I was thinking that I would be a psychology professor, but this idea that you can be a religion professor intrigued me. I didn't want to be an imam, I didn't want to lead a congregation, but I can do this. I'm interested in how people behave. But in some ways, it's much more about the religious motivation.

You were the president of the American Academy of Religion last year and part of their mission is to "foster excellence in the academic study of religion, and enhance the public understanding of religion." What do you wish was more understood about religion by the public?

One of the things that I was really proud that we were able to do at AAR was that we got some funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to think about this notion of literacy around religion. And one of the things we thought about was what do we wish that every college student knew about religion because only about 20% of US colleges have a religion department.

No one goes to an engineering professor and says, “Hey, you know, I’m a smart guy, I know how that bridge structure works.” And no one goes to the president of my university, Tim Snyder, lovely guy and a mathematician, no one goes to his office and says, “Hey, that set theory you have is completely wrong. Here’s how the equation should be.” People talk to us all the time in religion as if they know as much as we do because they’re religious folks. But being able to count doesn’t make you a math professor, right? Having read the Bible doesn’t make you a scholar of Christianity.

I always tell my students that I think the most dangerous person is not the person who said nothing on the subject. It’s the person who read one thing on the subject, and they think that they know everything about the subject.

One of the great sort of scholars of Islam is Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl and he would always start his classes at UCLA with a sort of photograph of him in front of his own library. Now, he’s got 50,000 books on Islamic law since he happens to be a scholar of Islamic law. And he didn’t do it to show off, or to say, “Hey, look at me, I’ve got 50,000 books on Islamic law,” it’s that “I own 50,000 books on Islamic law. How many books do you think there are in the world on Islamic law?”

How do you see religion playing a role in the increasingly secular future?

When I was growing up in Toronto in the 1980s, there was nothing else to do on Sunday but go to church. All the stores were closed, and it wasn’t until the ’60s when public transit started to run on Sundays. Why aren’t Americans going to church today in the same way? Well, because they have things to do.

That doesn’t mean that there isn’t that sense of connection with the ultimate concern kinds of ideas. But my students, I think, are

deeply connected to something other than themselves, whether they define it as spiritual or mystical. And some of that comes not just in the church, but in music and art. We just had one of the biggest religious festivals in Southern California, you know it as Coachella—and of course, it's not religious, it's a music festival. But it provides this sense of being in community with like-minded people listening to and participating in something collectively. Why is it that evangelicals and particularly Pentecostals are sort of booming? Well, if church means you come in and sit down and listen while the man on stage says something, that's not all that interesting. It's the same thing with pedagogy. If I get up and start lecturing for forty-five minutes nonstop, my students after twenty minutes are going to tune out.

If church means you get up, and you move, and you dance, and you're empowered, that's a lot more compelling. I remember the first time I moved to LA, a friend took me to a service at the First AME Church here in Los Angeles. I never went back, because [the pastor] Chip Murray was at the height of his glory, he was walking in the Lord and the choir was seventy-five people, and the church was literally rocking and moving. And so when he made that altar call, I almost got up out of my chair to run down there and get down on my knees and confess my sins to Jesus. Which, as a good Muslim boy, that's going to be a little hard. But it's the non-religious compelling experience that takes the place of this religious experience because young kids are not going to go to church, they're not going to go to church camp, they're going to go to Coachella.

Your theme for your plenary address at Atla Annual is “Comparative Religion and Theology: Practical, not Theoretical Matters for Atla.” Can you elaborate on this? What gave you the idea for this presentation?

I met John [Kutsko] when I was on the board of the AAR, because AAR and SBL meet together for the annual meeting every year. And it was this lovely moment when I would touch base with him. And then he moved from SBL to Atla, and he approached me and said, “Hey, would you be interested in speaking at Atla Annual?” and I said that I'd be honored. And I think for John, there's this sense of here we are with theological libraries that get put in a box of “Oh, well, theology is Christian, and these schools are Christian schools.” And John is thinking about how to serve the Muslims and Jews and

Buddhists at those schools, and making sure that Atla is serving all kinds of theology.

I decided to talk about the “practical vs. theoretical” idea, because back in the day when ministers were training for the church, they had graduating classes of 100. But now there’s more churches closing, and so this idea that, well, if we’re going to survive, we’re going to have to do something different, because there isn’t the need to train 100 pastors every year for the church, and how do we connect with the Muslim community that needs chaplaincy training for people who want to work in the hospital, or want to work in the prison system as chaplains. So there’s this question of how do we do chaplaincy programs. The imams are being asked to be social workers, therapists, chaplains, pastors and so there’re Muslims who just say, “Yeah, we don’t need to reinvent the wheel. Let’s go to these Christian places that know how to do this.” So, the Muslim studies program and the Buddhist studies program at Emmanuel College is really taking off and so you now have theological schools, many Christian theological schools, that have Muslims and Buddhists and Jews. Here we are at Loyola Marymount, a Catholic Jesuit school, with this Muslim who’s teaching theology across the hall from the Academy of Jewish Religion, California, which is a standalone Jewish seminary that’s now in the university. So here you have this Jewish seminary that’s in this Catholic Jesuit school and so I think that comparative component to this is so important for theological schools and for theological libraries.

I stole the title about being “practical not theoretical” from my mentor, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who was one of the great scholars in the world for the study of religion, and he created the Institute for Islamic Studies at McGill, then went to Harvard and directed the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions for twenty years. And he would talk about envisioning a Muslim talking to a Christian theologian and saying that for us, it’s really a practical, not a theoretical matter.

All this to say that, for me, as someone who’s both a scholar of Islam and a Muslim, it’s much more about the practical, the lived-out reality, of how do you live? How do you pray?

And for religious scholars and theological librarians, you have theory, but you also have the mission of how do you help people?

What do you do? What are the resources? So I was thinking about the practical kinds of things that come up around comparative theology.

What role do you think Atla/theological librarians play in the study of religion and theology?

As I said earlier, I was a working-class kid, and I still have my paper library card, which then became the barcode library card, because as a poor kid, my parents couldn't afford books. But I could go to the library, and I could take as many books as I could read. And then I go back and get more and more books. And that was an amazing thing for me.

And part of the job of librarians is to be a sort of bulwark and to say, "Oh, you're reading this? Have you read that? Have you thought about something that otherwise you might not have heard of?" And that's what I love about librarians.

What I love about the amazing work that librarians do, especially in this day and age: when did you ever think that the public enemy number one would be the librarian? Because you have books, and some of these books are "dangerous" and some people think we must ban them. And so that work that librarians do with digitization is fascinating and so important.

Just the other day, I got my copy of *In Trust* magazine. This is a magazine from the In Trust Center, which works with governing boards of theological schools. And so this article by Gregg Brekke is about Atla and what Atla is doing, and the changing face of the field, especially around the digitization of materials.

My presentation at Atla Annual will take place on Juneteenth, and talking about Juneteenth, talking about some of those kinds of things, like did you ever think burning books would come back? Did you ever think you'd have people saying, "Well, racism is done, and we don't need to talk about it," and it's like, no, there's still some pretty serious issues around race in this country. And what are some of those books that are being banned? Books that talk about Black people as human beings. That's part of the crucial job of librarians: to keep these books accessible.

What hopes or concerns do you have for the study of religion and theology going forward?

One of the concerns is people not seeing the relevance of the study of religion and theology. They might say something like religion is outdated or argue about religion versus science. But to me, religion and science are not mutually exclusive. And so I think that's something people think: that we need STEM, we need science, but we don't need any of this religion or humanity stuff.

One of my great mentors at the University of Toronto was Rob Prichard, who was the president there. And he would say that the humanities teach us who we are. And even if you're not religious, you live in a multicultural world, so your boyfriend's Hindu, your girlfriend's Jewish, or there's a Buddhist temple on your street. And for the humanities, think about why do we still read Shakespeare?

Why do we still talk about religion? Because these things tell us who we are.

There're two kinds of books in the world. There's the kind of book that you read once, and you don't need to read it again. And then there's the book you could keep coming back to, over and over again, whether that's *Beloved* or *Catcher in the Rye* or *The Handmaid's Tale*, or *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Every time you read it, you read it differently. And that's the hope: that even as the medium changes from paper to digital manuscripts, we're still going to tell those stories.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 This interview was previously published at <https://www.atla.com/blog/interview-with-atla-annual-opening-plenary-speaker-dr-amir-hussain/>.

An Interview with Lynn Silipigni Connaway

Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Executive Director, Research at OCLC

With Megan E. Welsh (Union College) and James Estes (Library of Congress)

Dr. Lynn Silipigni Connaway offered the closing plenary address at Atla Annual 2024. Dr. Connaway is Executive Director, Research, at OCLC. She is the 2023-2024 Follett Chair at Dominican University and has received the 2020 Distinguished Alumna Award of the Information School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the 2019 ASIS&T Watson Davis Award for Service, and the 2016 ALISE Service Award, among numerous other honors. She is the co-author of the sixth edition (2017) and seventh edition (2021) of *Research Methods in Library and Information Science* and contributed to *Library 2035: Imagining the Next Generation of Libraries*, as well as other titles. For more information, visit https://www.oclc.org/research/people/connaway-lynn_silipigni.html.

Dr. Connaway met with Atla members Megan E. Welsh and James Estes after Atla Annual to further explore the themes she discussed in her plenary address. The following interview has been edited for clarity and length.

You've mentioned that libraries are often reactive instead of proactive. What are your suggestions for library leaders to shift from a reactive approach to a more proactive one?

Leaders—everyone—should always be observing, and reading, and seeing what's happening around us. And one of the things that I've always said is that we should be studying, observing, paying attention to the behaviors of the four-year-olds. See what technologies they're engaging in, how they interact, if it's virtual or in-person, and how they engage in games, so that we can start to think about how we develop our offerings in libraries and in higher education, to engage these new students as they come through.

Research indicates that individuals do not pick up every new technology or every new gadget; it's dependent—you're going to hear me say this a lot!—upon context and situation, familiarity, convenience, and what their peers are using. I remember when my

niece (who's now sixteen) was four; we were sitting watching her sisters in a swim meet. She was bored and she took my phone; and started playing some games. Well, I have never played a game on my phone. She started playing the game, and she said, "Here, now you do it." I was trying to do it and, obviously, it wasn't the way you were supposed to do it. And she said, "Oh, Aunt Lynn, give me that phone! Let me show you how to do this." So that's when I started thinking, *Here she is, four years old, and she is so adept at using this phone for gaming.*

That's part of her learning. To this day, she's constantly on that phone doing things; or I'll say, "Don't you have homework?" [She'll respond:] "Oh yeah, I'm doing it!" It's a constant engagement with this phone. (To this day I still don't know how to play games on a phone!)

This parallels what colleagues say on social media about graduating high school students: "these are their learning behaviors. Get ready: in five or six years these will be our students! Don't be surprised when you see this type of learning behavior in five or six years."

That's it! And there's some things you can't anticipate. I don't think any of us ever thought that we would have an international pandemic and it would change everything. But again, we did adapt, and quickly! Because we had to!

In Library 2020, you discussed how libraries will need to meet their users when and where they are. This was incredibly prescient given the COVID-19 lockdowns. Since the lockdowns, multiple industries have embraced hybrid modalities, but in Library 2035 you still talk about the library as a place, both virtual and physical. There's still a need for onsite work while other work can be done remotely. How can library leaders strive for empathy and equity in distributing requirements and flexibilities?

That's a great question. When we conducted some interviews recently with library leaders along with managers and frontline staff, we heard about the inequities of these hybrid work environments. The individuals who have to be in the library at a desk or in a service area cannot work from home. It's very difficult. And so they feel that their needs are not being met or it's not equitable. And when you think about it, it isn't.

I mentioned this to one library leader who said, “You know, the administrators, many of us, work at home. But we *can*. But others have chosen these positions, to be in the front. So that’s their responsibility.”

Now, not all leaders talk like that. Some have looked at their organizational charts, and they trained individuals for different positions so that there is job sharing, so there are opportunities for others to work remotely instead of always face-to-face. Others flatten their organizational charts, which helps with this, but it doesn’t happen overnight. And some of us are very possessive of our positions, what we do and where we have the knowledge and expertise.

I’m not saying take someone out of where they are or what they know and just plop them somewhere else. This has to be very thoughtful, and it also requires a lot of communication, a lot of planning, training, and education. We can do that and choose to make changes; or you have to just be upfront in the beginning—and again it’s all about transparency and communication—and say, “those of you who have selected to be in certain positions, you have to be here in person.” But again, it’s not going to happen overnight; and it takes planning. Some leaders have done this effectively.

Do you have any comments about transparency as it applies to position descriptions, the hiring process, or workload distributions?

That’s a good question. One of the things I’ve noticed as we were looking at posted positions to see what the trends are right now (the names of the positions and what’s required) is that some of them don’t indicate the salary, and I think that’s really *not* a good idea. This is a big issue when you talk about equity, because if you’re looking for a position, you know what you’re making now. And why would you want to make some big move (which is expensive, and can be traumatic to move to a different area, place, position), if you go through the whole process and then you find out that the salary is not even at the salary where you are at this point?

In the job descriptions, some employers will put “hybrid.” To me, that means “I can live anywhere” and come in at certain times at my own expense. But when others have applied and gone through the process and start negotiating, *hybrid* means you live in that community. You may work remotely, one or two days. In these job ads,

we need to spell it out and it's only fair. It's fair to the applicants, and it's also fair to the search committee. Here you are spending all this time and energy and money to recruit and to hire, and if you don't specifically state what the requirements are, you have wasted everyone's time and energy.

Thank you for bringing up pay transparency. It is a big topic right now and so important.

In your vision for the future of libraries, you specifically use the term agile, which is a buzzword we hear quite often. It is heavily used in tech as a project management methodology with a very specific philosophy. I'm wondering if you can help unpack what agile means for libraries and how you would deploy an agile methodology in libraries.

I always quote Brian Mathews. He talks a lot about thinking like a startup [Mathews 2012]. Don't just think, "we're always just often focused on services;" think about *people*. The reason we are in business is to give individuals what they need when they need it. And to be agile—back to that context and situation—our needs can change within an hour. So we, as librarians, need to pay attention to those users and then those prospective users, those who aren't using us—there's a reason why. We really need to be able to identify what they need, and we need to be able to change, too.

I mean, how many times have I worked on something and said, "This isn't working. Could we try whatever?" And the response was, "No, we've always done it this way. It works. You don't know. You're new, and you don't know." I think we just have to be able to move and test. (I'm not saying drop everything.) The beauty of research is that we could try this; and if it doesn't work, we learned that it's not going to work; but we may have learned what changes we *can* make, in order to make what we're doing better. If we can say, "Let's just change one little thing, maybe one day a week. Move somebody here or do this." And if it's working and there's pickup, then we can move along and start transitioning to that. There are some things that we should just stop doing. To be agile, to me, brings in a lot of other words: *flexibility, transitioning, testing, uncertainty*. Being able to say, "It didn't work. I was wrong." All these things, to me, are packed into *agile*.

You try something, you learn from it, and you move on and adapt and you're flexible in that way.

It's very hard. I'll tell you: you can look at some of the things we've done, and I can say, "We failed." But, instead, I just say, "It didn't work and here's why. So don't do that." Then when we try it again, we tweak it. Ultimately, it's not a failure.

Librarianship has demanded this sort of adaptability even before we had to name it as such. Often there is this perception that libraries do what libraries have always done: open your box, you get your book, you catalog it, you shelve it. People don't realize how things are constantly in a change of flux and the workflow that we had three years ago no longer satisfies. Everything changes and we're constantly adapting to it, and as you have suggested, anticipating what's going to be coming down the road.

A friend once said, "We make things look easy." And people don't realize everything that goes into this transition, or this change, or this new offering. And that's a problem! It will work or we will do things on weekends, and she said that's an issue. We make it look easy, like it's just, "Oh yeah. We did this, but then we just came up with that."

Most people in librarianship are there for what we do. I don't think many of us are driven by money. And if so, I want the job they have! But it's a very different professional calling. And so we don't think about, "What's this doing to me?" That's just not in our make-up.

And making things look easy is really not beneficial to us, and we're all guilty of it. All of us.

Your vision of the future, the library as an institution that's locally engaged with the community, is compelling and speaks to a lot of present needs. You noted an increase in public libraries lending devices and materials that support patrons beyond just their need for books, and this was amazing. Atla's libraries focus on their institution's educational mission. But many of our patrons are students, and they can have a lot of these same issues in terms of food security, social isolation, and mental health. Being a graduate student doesn't suddenly make them immune. In fact, it makes them even more vulnerable. How can

smaller academic libraries with only one or two staff move toward this comprehensive vision of community support?

That's a very good question. I was visiting the University of Tennessee, and they gave me a tour of the library and it was finals. And the students were lined up . . . to get into the library! And the library said, "What we've learned from statistics on campus is that many students have a lot of issues, like emotional mental issues. What the Library has done is bring in the therapy dogs. And that was finals week: The therapy dogs are there, and the students were waiting to come in for that. And you think about that, and that's something so easy and simple to help the students.

I know that in other academic libraries they make special provisions for leaving the library open, just certain parts of the library. And this really came up in the pandemic because there are many students who don't have a home, who are living in their cars, or on the streets. And to provide some space for them is critically important.

With the food insecurities: We heard that some academic libraries require staff to be part of some community agency or association or some type of community service. And it's part of their work week! (And of course this could involve unions, so you have to be very careful about how you do it.)

Also, having other community agencies in a library. They do this in our library; they worked with social services. They'll have someone there who isn't there to counsel them but can help the individuals in the community and in this academic community find places for food, to live, if you need help with clothing, shelter, all these things. So have someone there! It's just another reference source. Again, it's partnering.

It's so critical now because resources are slim. To partner with other community agencies, to have someone there that can help them. I know we have clinics here in our town where you can go for testing or for medical needs if you do not have insurance. But just knowing about that is really helpful. So maybe you can't get someone from the community to be there all the time or even some of the time. Have the information there! The key is providing these sources, these resources.

Also, we need to think about that in a virtual environment as well, and to make some of these resources available on the library's web page because, as we know, some people may not go into our buildings. But they will use our resources online or go to our website.

That reinforces the notion of the library as a center for community. The next question is about context. You've mentioned it a few times and we appreciate your emphasis on moving beyond counting outputs in favor of understanding the library in the life of the user, in order to better tell our story and communicate our value. Do you have any suggestions for how our libraries can make that transition from statistics to story?

My colleague Kate McDowell does a lot in this area. She's been funded externally by IMLS [Institute of Museum and Library Services]. And I heard Kate talk a lot about this and I've read her work. We still need to have numbers. But you need to know what you're counting, and *why* you're counting it. And when you're telling that story, who's your audience? Let's face it, every library is vying for funds with every other academic department and every other support service on campus. When you're trying to get funding for library-wide programming resources, you need to have some numbers. But you need to also know who you're talking to and what you want. And then, with those numbers, tell a story. If you can, also add a story from a student, a faculty member—those life experiences support that story.

When I first started doing research, my colleague Marie Radford and I did a lot with virtual reference. We would get these great quotes from both librarians and users of virtual services. And so we started putting those in our writing and in our presentations to really exemplify what we're saying. It really, really helps. And our CEO has asked me, "what was that quote about? Can you find that? Give me that. I want to use it." Because it does tell a story. Going back to Brian Mathews: it's all about relationships, and you need to know who you're speaking to or with, and when it's your community members. And that's the story of the impact you have on your students, your faculty. And that speaks volumes, as you know, to the administration.

And that's putting these life experiences out there that show the impact, which is very hard to measure in libraries. We are always surrounded by key performance indicators. How will you make a

difference? But those stories, that's our impact: Individuals telling us, so we can tell others how we've made a difference.

This is a little different, but when we were collecting data for the opioid project, we interviewed directors, frontline staff managers, recovering addicts, those who have been affected by family or friends with this crisis. Public libraries had to partner with somebody within the community, with some other agency. We talked to those same individuals, and what hit me was this recovering addict who said, "just having someone there to say, we're doing these things within our community, with these other agencies—that made me feel like I was a person." That was it. *Making me feel like I was a person when no one else will even look at me.* And that had so much impact.

This is making me think about one of my first Atla conferences. I attended the session on assessment; it was very serious and about numbers. And in the Q&A at the end I asked, "How do you measure fun?" How do we measure those other affective qualities, in ways that that we're impacting our patrons. Are we a space that's safe, that's accessible? Do we provide a sense of joy and fun for our users?

Yes, and the only way you get to that is by talking to those individuals. And I think it's critically important. We had a study about discovery. We asked the participants, "What was joyful about this experience?" And someone said, "Why did you ask that question?" And I said, "What worked? What was delightful?"

I got it from Susan Dumais at Microsoft Research. She and I had given keynotes at a conference. And then we started talking, and so I said I'm going to try that line: "What was delightful about this experience?" And sometimes it's nothing, but that's okay. That tells you something too. But other times it's some tiny little nugget that you never thought of.

One key aspect of your work in Library 2035 is relationship building. Atla is an association for religion and theology libraries and librarians with a wide range of members, from small solo-librarian institutions to large multi-staff and multi-campus institutions. Can you talk more about collaboration and partnership building within the context of participating in an association?

It's that buying power. I think that's something we can't forget, that financial aspect. Because you can get better discounts, better deals, and more access to resources by having this association. There are other theological associations that are international, and partnering with them is important as well, because we are a global economy no matter what.

Also, collaboration. One of the studies we're working on now is the shared print monographic collections. You can go together, if you want a storage facility or if you want digitization projects. You want access! Access was the number one reason for smaller academic libraries to participate in shared print programs. And how do they participate? Through some type of consortium. These are all things that your association brings to you.

My mother always said, "Misery loves company." But you do want to talk to people. You may think that your challenges are unique to you; and it's really great to have colleagues you can talk to who are experiencing the same joys and the same challenges that you are. And collaboratively, collectively, you can possibly come up with some solutions. They won't be perfect. But again, working together as a group can really help in these areas.

And you can bring in faculty, especially junior faculty. They always need projects because they have to publish and get tenure. Develop a relationship. You can bring them into some of your projects. And not just for you, for one library, but for the whole group. The partnering is critical in multiple ways; and at a global level, we need to start thinking globally: some countries are often ahead of us if you look at open access, the UK and the Netherlands especially. We can learn and work with them. With information literacy, Australia was the leader. And, again, we can work with them, and learn, and make things better. I just think that Atla is a great starting point for this.

If I had to use jargon from our industry, I would say that's actually a great altar call for participation in an association—membership, belonging to an association, we move together more successfully as a group.

We have reached the end of our questions. Is there anything else you want to end with?

I was very impressed with Atla. I have known about it because of my relationship with the former executive director [Brenda Bailey-Hainer] and with Gillian [Cain]. (It's that Colorado connection there.)

But I was really impressed—with the members who were there, the excitement, and the engagement, and you don't see that often. I go to a lot of conferences, and you don't see that everywhere, but you could feel that, and I'm really impressed and I'm so glad that I was invited to do this! I was really happy that I was able to join you, and actually honored to be invited. I was just really impressed with everything, the membership, the enthusiasm!

We are grateful to Dr. Connaway for her plenary presentation at Atla Annual, for her suggestion to meet in a subsequent interview, and for the time spent in that conversation.

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PAPERS

Knowledge Injustice in the Theological Library

Kris Veldheer, Library Director, Catholic Theological Union

ABSTRACT: This paper gives an overview of my work with decolonial and postcolonial issues in the theological library based on my 2023 doctoral work for my Doctor of Ministry degree. In it, I assign the roles of keepers, producers and providers of knowledge to theological librarians and examine these roles through a framework from Kwok Pui-lan. I include thoughts and interpretations from a wide range of decolonial and postcolonial thinkers as well as aspects of ritual theory. I also draw from survey work I did of Catholic Theological Union students and theological library directors.

Before I begin this paper, I have two caveats.

First, this paper is based on the Doctor of Ministry Thesis-Project that I had originally proposed in 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the beginning, I wanted to focus exclusively on international students because Catholic Theological Union's enrollment usually runs about 40% students from outside of North America, and my DMin was going to focus on international student use of the library. But as COVID-19 continued, I realized that using that category (international students) excluded another whole group of CTU students, namely immigrants and refugees, or the descendants of immigrants and refugees. Why is this important? Because to understand the students at CTU and how they use the library, I had

to understand the contexts they came from, not just their country of origin. Many of my so-called “American” students grew up in ethnic communities attending church services in a language other than English and using a version of the Bible that wasn’t in English. Some even served as the family translator, bridging the gap between the community of English speakers in the United States and the language or world their families came from in the Majority World. Essentially, they lived in two or more cultures. There were also students who had come from academic disciplines outside of religion, theology, or even the humanities, for whom doing research in a theological library was a mystery. So I broadened my research group to include all students at CTU, who then formed the basis for my study.

Second, I would encourage those who are interested in a much fuller treatment of the topic to read my DMin thesis, “Epistemic Injustice in the Theological Library: A case study of the Paul Bechtold Library at Catholic Theological Union” (Veldheer 2023).

Let’s start with the abstract from my DMin, because I certainly cannot cover everything in the confines of the conference presentation; but the abstract may help you better understand what I was trying to accomplish with my project.

Focusing on the Bechtold Library at CTU, I will explore the extent to which aspects of decoloniality affect the practices of a theological library and its diverse student body. Keeping, producing, and providing knowledge comes with cultural assumptions about what should be kept in a library, the types of knowledge they should help produce and services they should provide. As a member of Western society, the CTU library carries a legacy of colonial thought which has shaped the existing library collection and influences the knowledge produced by library users. Using the work of Kwok Pui-Lan, I will look through decolonial and postcolonial lenses to reveal injustice and inform possible interventions.(Veldheer 2023, iv)

Let’s get practical and ask: so what and where did this come from?

Prior to starting my doctoral work, I spent 25 years watching students navigate the library from my perch behind either the reference desk or the circulation desk. For some, the library seemed like familiar territory, while for others, the library was a wide-eyed, white-knuckle ride through an exotic wilderness. Some students approached me with open enthusiasm for learning and research, while others fearfully approached, often to tell me they had no idea

where to start. Others were intrepid souls who relied on previous experiences to navigate the library space. But what each one had in common was that they came out of different contexts with various cultural assumptions about the library. Often their experiences were vastly different experiences from my own, and the students carried baggage from previous library experiences about what they would find in the library and the services the library would provide. But referring back to my abstract, what makes this *colonial* and what do I mean by *colonial thought*?

Although not intentionally, academic libraries in the U.S. do not always meet the needs of students who may be unfamiliar with the Western educational setting. As Cuiyang Mu, a sciences librarian at the University of New Zealand, points out, “critical to the academic success of international students is their ability to use a research library and its databases. Culture and communication differences make international students uncertain about the subject resources and services available to them in a library. For instance, services such as interlibrary loan, librarian reference-by-appointments, and live online reference are concepts new to international students” (Mu 2006, 49). Extending Mu’s observation of international students, I would argue that many students, not just international students—and even faculty—struggle with understanding library terminology. We who work in theological libraries have our own set of mysterious practices and rituals. Our ability to find lost books and obscure citations borders on magic. Cuiyang Mu’s comments about educational settings in New Zealand have resonance with educational settings in the U.S. Like the other theological libraries I have served in the past, the CTU library has a certain way of operating, from how library books are accessed to the length of time books can leave the library, and even how to use all of the electronic resources available through the library website. At one level, what Cuiyang Mu is referring to picks up on the actions of the library. Yet, Cuiyang Mu also mentions culture. I think whatever cultural differences may be present for students are exacerbated when they encounter library culture.

But what remains untouched in all of this talk about culture is how libraries wrestle with their place in the institutions they serve. ATS devotes an entire standard, namely Standard 6, to the library; and no other part of a theological school is singled out for a separate standard. Standard 6 opens with:

Theological schools are communities of faith and learning grounded in the historical resources of the tradition, the scholarship of the academic disciplines, and the wisdom of communities of practice. Theological libraries are curated collections and instructional centers with librarians guiding research and organizing access to appropriate resources. Libraries and librarians partner with faculty in student learning and formation to serve schools' educational missions and to equip students to be effective and ethical users of information resources. (ATS 2020, 10)

Then before looking at any other issue related to the library, Standard 6 takes up the Purpose and Role of the Library (6.1, 6.2), requiring a clear mission statement for the library similar to the mission statement for the school, and also that the administrators and stakeholders of a school understand the library as a “central academic resource that enhances the school’s educational programs” (ATS 2020, 10). But the question for me remains: although the standards of accreditation are clearly written about what the library is supposed to do, what is the reality? How is CTU library contributing to student learning and formation?

In 1960, a special issue of the journal *Library Trends* was subtitled “Current Trends in Theological Librarianship.” A conclusion about the special issue was drawn about theological libraries by Decherd Turner, who was then at the Bridwell Library of Southern Methodist University:

Theological libraries are indelibly tied to theological education. Analysis and judgment in every paper in this issue springs from the ever-present question: ‘What is the content, structure, and purpose of theological education?’ So sensitive to this foundation have been the contributors that no portion of the picture could be developed without some expression concerning the nature of theological education (Turner 1960, 281).

But theological libraries as an entity don’t run themselves. Rather, libraries like the one at CTU start with the librarians. Timothy Lincoln of Austin Presbyterian Seminary writes in his 2004 essay titled, “What’s A Seminary Library For”: “Theological libraries matter because patrons need skilled specialists to assist them in minding pertinent information” (Lincoln 2004, 4). Lincoln’s essay covers much ground furthering Turner’s conclusion that theological libraries make substantial contributions to the educational missions of the schools that they serve. This may be a reason why ATS gives the library a separate standard equal to the academic degree programs.

So let's put the CTU library in context. The CTU library is located within the Catholic Theological Union located in Chicago. CTU, by its own diversity statement,

Reaffirms its commitments to being an inclusive community that draws on diversity as a source of learning and understanding. We believe that diverse students, faculty, staff and curricular offerings are essential for fostering inclusion and engagement and play vital roles in nurturing a welcome climate for all. (CTU 2020)

The diversity statement is aspirational in nature but speaks to the need for the CTU library to serve that diverse population. Yet the fact remains, CTU and by extension the CTU library are also situated in the setting of the United States and formed within the educational culture of the USA. This is an inescapable fact and brings with it certain assumptions. In the US, colleges, universities, and graduate schools like CTU espouse what is commonly known as a "Western worldview." The "Western worldview" is loosely defined by John Hobson, a professor of politics and international relations at the University of Sheffield, as "a worldview that is centered on Western civilization or a biased view that favors it [Western civilization] over non-western civilizations. When the term is applied to history, it may be used in reference to an apologetic stance towards European colonialism and other forms of imperialism" (Hobson 2012, 185). The influence and legacy of this view still exists in higher education in the United States and is also known as colonialism. In commenting on coloniality, Argentinian Walter Mignolo writes,

"But no matter what it is called, the west was, and still is, the only geo-historical location that is both part of the classification of the world, and the only perspective that has the privilege of possessing dominant categories of thoughts from which and where the rest of the world can be described, classified, understood, and improved." (Mignolo 2005, 36)

Indian Biblical scholar R.S. Sugirtharajah writes, "Colonialism is not simply a system of economic and military control, but a systematic cultural penetration and domination" (Sugirtharajah 1995, 460). Some scholars draw distinctions referring to colonialism in the past tense as something that happened as European explorers brought their culture to other places. Sugirtharajah implies that coloniality refers to colonial situations in the present day drawing on Mignolo's words. For the purposes my thesis-project I assumed that both

colonialism and coloniality are still active and relevant terms to use when discussing the theological library. And despite wanting to be diverse and inclusive, CTU was founded and is still geo-historically located in the West, specifically the U.S.

One of the services of the theological library as described in Standard 6 is to enhance student learning in the classroom. Latino theologian and former CTU Academic Dean Gary Riebe-Estrella observes:

Few of us would challenge that in too many of our classrooms the learning/teaching style privileges the values of the Western Enlightenment (a term that contains in itself a value judgement on persons and things non-Western; that is, they are not enlightened) such as the prizing of the individual over the group, individual creativity and initiative over interdependence and collaboration, rational thought over emotional response, writing over orality, the universal over the particular. In these cases, as with the culture of our schools, the classroom structures and procedures that embody these values appear to the dominant group to be both normal and normative. Accommodations are seen as concessions. And rarely does this underlying value system and its historical and cultural contextuality come up for faculty discussion and critique, understandably, though wrongly, so. For it is the value system that produced the educational system in which most faculty have been trained and which has shaped their understanding and practice of education. That is, it is the value system that undergirds their self-understood identity. To challenge the worldview is not only to introduce change but to threaten the fundamental stability of the educational enterprise of which faculty see themselves as the center—a challenge that will sometimes be met with some technical, though rarely adaptive, change and which almost always meets with stiff resistance. (Riebe-Estrella 2009, 23)

While I have heard conversations about adapting teaching styles and revamping curriculum to improve learning at CTU, I have never heard a conversation either at or outside of a faculty meeting that directly addresses coloniality. Likewise, based on the required and recommended reading lists each semester, the books do not directly address coloniality either. This observation about the classroom from Riebe-Estrella holds true for the library as well, in my opinion, and again echoes Turner's comment. Within an institution, academic libraries are a vital component, serving two essential roles: supporting the curriculum and assisting faculty and student research. Applying Riebe-Estrella's comments on the classroom to the library, it is not difficult to draw out this fact that the very activities of the library favor the same privileges of Hobson's "Western worldview."

Because academic libraries do not operate in a vacuum, they mirror the institutions they serve, which is not necessarily intentional on the part of the library, but something that remains unchallenged.

Thinking about this from a slightly different perspective, Michel Andraos, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at St. Paul University, raises two timely and interesting questions: “How do we do theological education that takes both the issues of diversity and coloniality seriously in the globalized seminaries and divinity schools of North America?” and “How do we make our educational institutions as a whole, a learning and teaching environment that is aware of, respectful, and hospitable to cultural and racial diversity?” (Andraos 2012, 4). I think these two questions challenge the theological library to look into how the library privileges its place in the academic community and is impacted by the values of the Western Enlightenment. If we are going to take coloniality seriously as Andraos suggests, then we also need to understand a bit about the subtle differences between decolonial and postcolonial.

At this point it is important to lay down my understanding of the terms decolonial and postcolonial, because these terms were key dialog partners in my understanding of how the library does knowledge injustice, even unintentionally. Although there were many definitions to choose from, I used the work of Claudio Carvalhaes. Introducing the book *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives*, the editor Carvalhaes observes:

While both postcolonialism and decolonialism have important theoretical differences and some authors will like to use one term over the other, in this book the two terms are used interchangeably and so will be assumed to be synonymous throughout the book. They are modes of analysis in which social, cultural, religious, gendered, sexual, and economic ways of living are assessed critically by those who have been victimized by patterns of structural domination and have been dismissed from the historical processes of life creation: namely, the poor, the disenfranchised, the subaltern, the wretched of the earth, and the colonized. (Carvalhaes 2015, 17)

Carvalhaes, a Brazilian who teaches at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, adds a footnote to his observation. He writes,

“In very broad and short strokes, one can say that postcolonialism emerges from experiences in the Middle East and Asia, is a critique to Orientalism and has been deeply influenced by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Decolonialism, on the other hand, arises from experiences in

Latin America and the Caribbean, is a critique against Occidentalism and its leading figures have been Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, and Walter Mignolo" (Carvalhaes 2015, 17).

While there is always a need to pay attention to language and how we speak about something, I think there needs to be some patience with the use of terms like decolonial and postcolonial. My goal is not to develop a common vocabulary or enforce theoretical differences, but let the voices speak for themselves.

Thus the gist of what I was trying to do in my thesis-project was to explore how aspects of decoloniality and postcoloniality had an effect on the practices of my theological library, so I could better serve the research needs of diverse students, including both international students who are new to Western modes of education, and those students—both international and US-born—who have previous educational experience in the U.S. Because postcolonial theory and decolonial theory share many of the same concerns, though from different contexts, I wanted to put them in conversation to propose steps a library can use to start a process of dismantling current colonial practices that might inhibit students from effectively undertaking library research.

But where was I going to find a methodology to explore decoloniality and postcoloniality in the library? My colleague Carmen Nanko-Fernandez stated in the opening paragraphs of her article "Held Hostage by Method? Interrupting Pedagogical Assumptions Latinamente":

Did you ever wonder where theological educators come from? What networks of multiple-belongings intersect to form and inform those who articulate, in the vernacular of their place, the mystery of God and all it implies for our relationships with the divine and the whole of creation? Do you wish there were an efficient survey tool to assess your location on the theological spectrum? So who is mapping the coordinates of contemporary theologizing, and why does it seem that only some of us bear an obligation to socially locate—especially to locate as Other? What are the jarring implications of taking seriously transnational and intercultural compositions of our churches, classrooms, and scholarly academies? Or is the "new normal" disturbingly pointing to the establishment of new norms emanating from positions of dominance that are seeking to control the inevitable and uncontrollable? (Nanko-Fernandez 2013, 35)

I decided to adapt the work of Asian feminist theologian Kwok Pui-lan for my methodology and apply it to the library in the mode of what Kwok calls *postcolonial imagination*. In the introduction to her book *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, Kwok lays down this challenge: “Even progressive theologians in the United States—feminist, liberationist, and racial minorities among them—who have championed the use of critical categories such as gender, class, and race in their works, have not sufficiently addressed theology’s collusion with colonialism in their theoretical frameworks” (Kwok 2005, 7). Drawing on her own intellectual history, Kwok proposes “three distinct and yet overlapping modes of postcolonial imagination: historical, dialogical, and diasporic” (Kwok 2005, 22). For Kwok these modes “make a critical contribution to unpacking the process of ‘decolonizing the mind’. It illustrates the complexities of identity formation of a postcolonial feminist theologian and how the experiences of the colonized, the exiled, the immigrant, and the diasporic raise new questions for and broaden the horizon of feminist theology” (Kwok 2005, 22). I used the modes as a dialogue partner to further the thesis statement’s goal of looking through decolonial and postcolonial lenses. Kwok’s postcolonial imagination refers to “a desire, a determination, and a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and guises” (Kwok 2005, 2). Kwok adds more nuance to her understanding of the three modes when she writes, “As I reflect on my own thinking process as an Asian postcolonial feminist theologian, I discern three critical movements which are not linear but overlapped and interwoven in intricate ways. They are more like motifs in a sonata, sometimes recurrent, sometimes disjointed, with one motif dominating at one moment, and another resurfacing at another point” (Kwok 2005, 31).

Each of the first three chapters of my DMin take up one of Kwok’s critical movements, beginning with historical imagination. To understand the history of my students, I did research with current library users and theological library directors, asking them to reflect on their experiences. It led to two surveys and some data.

- The first survey gathered data from current CTU students, who presumably come to the library.
- A second survey sought to understand the current practices of theological librarians who are members of Atla. This survey was completed by library

directors.

- The third source of data is from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) using the results of the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) for CTU.

I drew heavily on my own research data for the dialogue with historical imagination since using the GSQ data didn't really tell me anything about how the students used the library. Rather the GSQ data just told me more about whether they liked the library or not. The totality of the research data from my surveys highlighted in some ways how little students knew about library resources and how many assumptions library directors made about the students using their libraries. Although the research data revealed some alignment between the students and the librarians, let's look at two instances where there wasn't.

One area of divergence was how students preferred to learn about library services and resources versus how librarians provided instruction for students. There was agreement between both groups about online tutorials, but a wide separation around student appointments with the librarian. Students didn't rank appointments with a librarian highly, whereas librarians listed appointments as their primary way of doing instruction. There may have been some ambiguity or confusion in understanding what I meant by appointments, but the responses made me wonder what the barriers for students might be in making an appointment with a librarian. On the other hand, there was alignment between the two groups around instruction from the librarian for individuals or small groups. The survey didn't ask specifically how the students came to the librarian for help, which is something that needs to be explored further in future work. Given the range of librarians answering the question while all the students came from the same school, I can see where the differences lie to some extent because each library director has a different student body. But I also wondered if the librarians are asking the students what they want instead of making assumptions about what students need? It was also hard to pin down the ways students learn about a library since this research was done in 2021 during COVID-19 and many students weren't coming into the library physically. This may have also affected how the librarians answered the question from their perspective. Librarians need to do a great

deal more research on who uses their library and how those users come to know about the library beyond just how to use the library.

A second area of data to consider was the response to a question about when students want to learn about the library, versus when librarians think is the ideal time to teach students about library resources. It should be noted that there might be semantic differences in the way the original question was asked that led to deeper differences in the responses, but the contrast in responses was rather stark, with almost 82% of the students wanting to learn about the library at the beginning of the semester, while only 26% of the library directors thought instruction at the beginning of the semester was important. Taking seriously the questions raised by Michel Andraos mentioned earlier, I don't think the difference necessarily infers any intentional colonial intent on the part of the library directors, but rather, has anyone asked students what their preferences are? I know that never crossed my mind when I was actively doing library instruction. There is much more data to interpret, and I encourage you to read chapter one of the DMin to understand the rest of the questions I asked. For now, let's move on to looking at the library.

The second of Kwok's critical movements is dialogical imagination. I used this to have a dialog about how librarians do their work. Keeping, producing, and providing knowledge were the three essential roles I devised for librarians, but each comes with cultural assumptions about what should be kept in a library—the types of knowledge the library should help produce and the services the library should provide (Veldheer 2023, 29). A 2021 marketing report was released that listed the top ten academic publishers (Simba 2021).

- Cambridge University Press*
- Cengage Research
- EBSCO Publishing*
- Elsevier
- Informa
- John Wiley & Sons*
- Oxford University Press*
- ProQuest*
- SAGE Publications, Inc.*
- Springer Nation

The six publishers marked with an asterisk are those I buy from routinely and use their electronic products extensively. All of these are headquartered in either Western Europe or North America. What does this list say about the resources we make available to our students and faculty and the potential creep of colonialism, both in the structure of the databases and the overall content? Similarly, the American Academy of Religion lists on their website that they have a partnership with Oxford University Press to produce “quality scholarship” and provides a thirty percent discount on these book titles to AAR members (AAR 2023).

It remains unknown how AAR defines quality scholarship, but the partnership with Oxford isn’t surprising, and highlights Mignolo’s observation from above about the reach of the West. This reach extends even to the journal titles held by my library. Although representing a much larger number of publishers from the Global South, the almost 250 journal subscriptions and standing orders received annually by the CTU library are managed through an arrangement between the library and EBSCO Information Services, a company based in the U.S. Why does the CTU library use EBSCO? Because EBSCO simplifies the journals management process by working with each of the publishers, and no matter where the journals are published, the CTU library can pay the invoices in U.S. dollars, rather than struggle with currency conversions. A library the size of the CTU library, with a staff of three librarians, could not offer the depth and breadth of journals and other resources that it does, given how time-intensive it is to individually track journal and book publishers, without the help of vendors like EBSCO. My question remains: if Atla members are so dependent on mostly Western—and by extension colonial—providers for the material they supply to their libraries, then how can we expect students from different cultures to interact with this material? I don’t have an answer other than to admit it is much easier to work with information providers who speak my language and work in my currency than it is to deal with publishers who don’t.

Although Kwok’s postcolonial imagination was always underlying my work, as a methodology, it wasn’t always a good fit. But as I was reminded by my faculty colleagues, when you are working on something new, everything doesn’t always work the way you want it to. In thinking further about where my library gets resources, I was

taken with this observation from Kwok because I think it gets at the issue of who is producing the knowledge we keep in our libraries:

The primary issue concerns the subject who is doing the “dialogical imagining.” The subject I had in mind then was very influenced by the construction of the Western liberal subject, unrestrained by social and historical location, free to create, to think, to mold consciousness, such that he or she can shape disparate parts into the “whole.” (Kwok 2002, 66)

I am not sure I ever found the Western liberal subject, but I am fairly confident I won't find it looking only in library resources published and produced in the North American context.

Shifting to seeing librarians as providers of knowledge, this rather lengthy quote from my thesis distills how I tried to make sense of what we as librarians do every day in the library. To understand how we were providers of knowledge, I drew on ritual theory, particularly because it is these very rituals that provide the structure for how we run the library. As librarians, where would we be without our circulation policies and our cataloging rules? Could we deal with the chaos that might come from developing a more user-friendly system than Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress? Can we all agree to shelve the journals in alphabetical order?

Behind the scenes, there are systems and principles, rituals if you will, that govern how library activities are supposed to operate. Checking out and renewing books, getting materials via IShare from other libraries in Illinois, logging into online resources, using other libraries outside of CTU, navigating the library website, interlibrary loans, course reserves, book loan periods, and handling overdue books, are just some of the systems the CTU library has in place along with the principles which govern how these systems work. These systems and principles cover more than just the print materials. E-books also may come with loan periods or other restrictions as well. These are common library activities that students engage with every day and they take on a ritual aspect much like religious rituals in being repetitive and patterned behaviors which as providers of knowledge, librarians rely on to literally provide the knowledge. Without these systems and rituals, books wouldn't circulate, electronic resources couldn't be used outside of the library and the operations of the library would fall into chaos. (Veldheer 2023, 102–103)

Dialoging with Kwok as a postcolonial theologian is a clarion call for librarians, as keepers, producers and providers of information, to consider and reconsider where we get our library resources and

how we interact with those whom our libraries serve. There is always more work to do in this regard.

Using Kwok's approach with diasporic imagination, how do we move forward to start the work of addressing colonialism as it exists in our libraries. Working with my existing framework of librarians as keepers, producers and providers of information, I looked at the work of Indigenous Peoples in Canada particularly around the creation of their own libraries, such as the one at the University of British Columbia that some of us learned about during the Atla conference in Vancouver, held in 2019. I think the ways in which the First Nations people have developed organizational schemes for their collections is worth a much deeper look. They have created systems using indigenous languages and cultures to keep their information and not just in an archival sense. Having libraries organized around indigenous ideals centers the knowledge in ways culturally sensitive and familiar to First Nations people. For producers of knowledge, I suggest we look at participatory research that allows students to participate in producing knowledge using research methods from the contexts of our students, instead of always relying on Western models. For this I drew on the work of Debra Luna and her work with Paulo Freire's 1970 observation on the "culture of silence." In working with Mexican immigrant families, Luna's research involved trying to determine why some students succeed or don't succeed in American schooling, concluding that what was really lacking was the perspective of the very group most affected: the students (Luna 2002, 8). Luna proposed a model of participatory research based on transformative dialogue, which she believes is more than a methodology. Luna's research echoes in Kwok's writing about diasporic imagination and her experiences of being de-centered and multi-centered. There is still a great deal to explore and to work out in how other cultures might do research, which will drastically change how librarians approach research as well.

Finally, as providers of knowledge, we need to give students voice in the research process. Drawing from the work of Gayatri Spivak's writing on the subaltern, "It seems to me that finding the subaltern is not so hard, but actually entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways: learning to learn without this quick-fix frenzy of doing good with an implicit assumption of cultural supremacy which is legitimized by

unexamined romanticization, that's the hard part"(Spivak 1996, 293). I have been pondering Spivak's observation in the library context, namely that when students come into the library seeking help, the expectation on the part of the librarian is that the student has the agency to speak for themselves. But I have come to believe this is not the correct assumption. No matter what, there will always be a different power dynamic between the librarian and the student even if the librarian is trying not to make assumptions about the student. I think we need to find ways to set aside some of the assumptions we might be making about what students want and let them speak for themselves in the research process.

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The Politics of Library Science in Weimar Germany

The Eichler-Harnack Exchange

Evan Francis Kuehn, Assistant Professor of Information Literacy, North Park University

ABSTRACT: In 1923, the famous theologian-librarian Adolf von Harnack responded to an essay written by Ferdinand Eichler, Director of the University Library at Graz, titled “Library Science as Science of Value, Library Politics as World Politics.” In the exchange, the two librarians took opposing sides in a discussion about the purpose of academic libraries and collection development. Eichler’s idealistic and universalist approach saw librarianship as a “science over the sciences” that held a unique responsibility for world culture through its responsibility for books. Harnack, on the other hand, took a more pragmatic approach and recognized the limitations posed by political economy to the mission and practices of the library. Although published a century ago, the political pressures and vocational ideals discussed in these essays remain surprisingly relevant for theological librarianship. This paper highlights Harnack’s underappreciated role as the director of the Royal Prussian Library, discusses the Eichler-Harnack exchange, and introduces excerpts from the two essays translated into English for the first time.

In 1939, Felix E. Hirsch, then a librarian at Bard College, wrote an essay in memory of Adolf von Harnack for *The Library Quarterly* titled “The Scholar as Librarian,” in which he recounted important biographical details of the legendary historian’s life, especially as they related to his service as the director of the Prussian Royal Library. In a section on Harnack’s theory of library science, Hirsch writes that “in a long and pungent essay which contains the kernel of his philosophy of librarianship, he objects to the exaggerated ideas about his profession which were held by the Austrian librarian, Eichler. Library science, Harnack felt, was not a superscience” (Hirsch 1939, 316). Harnack’s essay borrowed its title from the pamphlet to which

it responded, “Library Science as Science of Value, Library Politics as World Politics,” by Ferdinand Eichler (1923), Director of the University Library at Graz. In reading these essays, we gain an understanding of two opposing viewpoints on the nature of librarianship from the Weimar Republic, which still read as quite contemporary, despite their age. Many of the political critiques and questions about how and whether librarianship constitutes a science are still discussed today, and often on very similar terms. Following a historical introduction to the Eichler-Harnack exchange are translated excerpts from the two essays.

Ferdinand Eichler’s initial pamphlet was written in April of 1923. Harnack’s response was published as an essay in the *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, an important library journal associated with the State Library of Berlin (Breslau 1990). The essays deal with questions about the philosophy of librarianship, and so they speak for themselves to a certain extent. But behind their theoretical discussions stood fascinating lives and complex histories that are worth investigating.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Within theological circles, Harnack is well known as a champion of liberal, scientific approaches to Protestant theology at the turn of the twentieth century. His most widely read book, *What is Christianity?* sought to identify an essence of the faith, a kernel at the heart of the husks of historical developments. He published a famous multi-volume *History of Dogma*, studies of the expansion of early Christianity, an important study of the early heretic Marcion, and, significant for theological librarians, *Über den privaten Gebrauch der Heiligen Schriften in der alten Kirche*, a study of literacy and the private reading of the Bible in late antiquity.

Beyond his prolific career as a theologian and church historian, though, Harnack was one of the most celebrated German scholars of the twentieth century and played an integral role in shaping the modern European academic world. He was the founding head of the Kaiser Wilhelm Societies, now known as the Max Planck Institutes. (Max Planck himself succeeded Harnack in this position.) And, most

relevant for our consideration, Harnack served as General Director of the Prussian Royal Library from 1905–1921.

Ferdinand Eichler is not nearly as well-known, and yet Eichler also had an influential career as a philologist and a librarian and deserves to be much more widely read than he is (Zvonar 2003a 19–32; Zvonar 2003b). Unlike Harnack, who was a theologian turned librarian, Eichler spent his entire career in librarianship, and taught and researched in the field of library science. He wrote a programmatic text on *The Concept and Task of Librarianship* in 1894 and on *Library Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century* in 1897, both themes that will resurface in the 1923 essay. Eichler also, like Harnack, was engaged with manuscript studies. While Harnack mostly worked with early church manuscripts, Eichler’s period of specialization was early modern literature. Exemplary of this work was his 1908 study of a Bible copied by Erasmus Stratter, a fifteenth-century scribe, and held by the Graz library.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The period after World War I and the 1918 Revolution was, unsurprisingly, extremely volatile in Germany, but there were also important developments in the academy. Friedrich Althoff served as the minister of education during these years and developed what came to be known as the “Althoff System.” Germany was perceived to be behind the United States and nations of western Europe, and Harnack and Althoff both pushed for the development of the research university as we know it today.

Upon his appointment at the Prussian Royal Library, Harnack needed to prove himself as the new General Director; he was not a trained librarian, although he was a recognized scholar and administrator. He very effectively lobbied for an increase in the library’s budget, though. He established book circulation for the first time at the institution—previously it was entirely non-circulating—in hopes of improving research outcomes. And during his tenure, a new library building was constructed (Hirsch 1939, 300, 311).

Finally, an important aspect of librarianship in Germany more generally that is alluded to in the essays was the development of the Deutsche Bücherei just before World War I. The Bücherei was a

library program based in Leipzig that sought to collect, exhaustively, every book published in the German language from the year 1913 forward. This project is still underway today, now called the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, based in both Leipzig and Frankfurt. Harnack actually opposed this project, or at least rejected its philosophy as a model for the research university (Hirsch 1939, 308). Not every book needed to be in a research collection, and on the other hand, a research collection always needed to be international in scope. It couldn't simply collect German work exhaustively, and neglect work in other languages. This was a rival model that was being developed at the time. A century later, the Bücherei coexists with more traditional research library models.

As mentioned previously, Harnack needed to prove himself as a library director, and did this in an extremely effective manner. He was known to only be on the library premises for one or two hours a day and spent most of his time advocating for it with stakeholders (Hirsch 1939, 306). Harnack was meticulous about what we would today call assessment and completed significant reports on the library collection. Harnack is also known for his concept of a “political economy of librarianship”; he spoke of professors of librarianship as a part of the national economy, describing them as “geisteswirtschaftlichen”—which roughly translates to what we would refer to as the “knowledge economy” today (Harnack 1921; Umstätter 2009, 328–9). This practical and quantitative approach to librarianship is part of what Eichler was objecting to in his more idealistic approach.

It is difficult to overstate how volatile a year 1923 was for Germany. The Ruhr Valley was taken by French occupation forces at the beginning of the year. Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch occurred in November. And throughout 1923, devastating hyperinflation rocked German society. The following charts visualize monthly average exchange rates for the paper mark, an economic indicator that is not insignificant for considerations related to library management. We see that already at the beginning of the year the mark was nearly worthless—in January the rate was almost 18,000 marks to the dollar. By the time Eichler published his essay on librarianship, this had risen to 25,000 marks to the dollar (see figure 1). And beginning in late summer, inflation was so out of control that the steady climb from earlier in the year looks like a flat line (see figure 2). By

the time Harnack published his response to Eichler in December, the exchange rate was over four trillion marks to the dollar. It is incredible that this material context hardly factors into the conversation of these two essays. Eichler's situation in Austria would have been somewhat better than Harnack's in Germany, but they also experienced devastating inflation in 1921. Certain individuals and institutions with international connections were relatively sheltered from the worst consequences of hyperinflation. But it is still difficult to imagine how these libraries continued to function on a day-to-day basis.

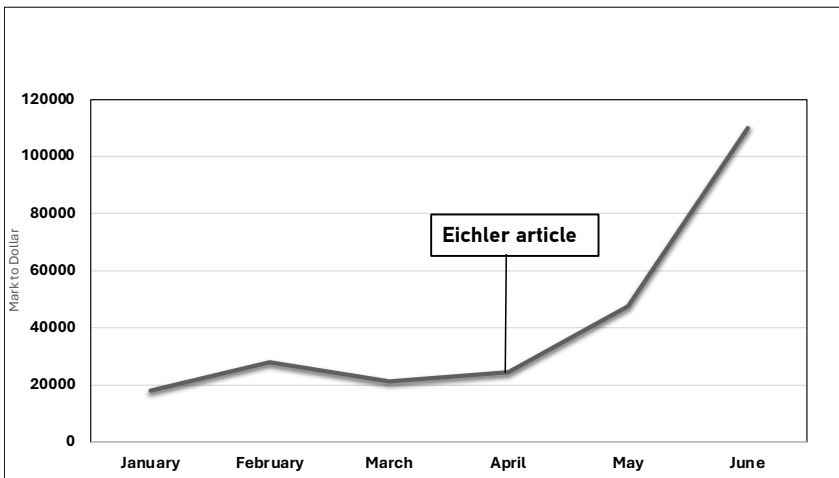


Figure 1: Dollar Exchange Rate of Paper Mark, January to June 1923 (Feldman 1977, 472)

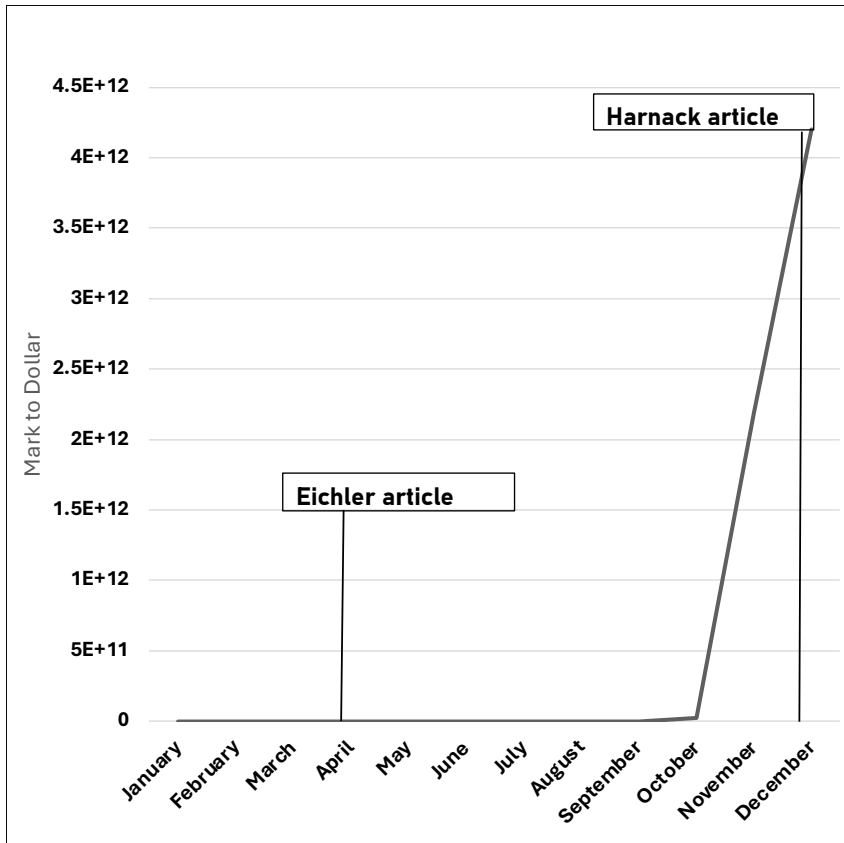


Figure 2: Dollar Exchange Rate of Paper Mark, January to December 1923 (Feldman 1977, 472)

TRANSLATION EXCERPTS

As the title of these essays suggests, both Eichler and Harnack sought to define library science and library politics. Following are excerpts from my translation of the two essays.

Eichler on library science:

Given the infinite diversity of intellectual products, which arise day after day and find their way to the general public, the question concerning the worth of these products individually and as a collection cannot be ignored. We need to make its assessment a science, which as a science of values is disinterested in individual literary trends, objective, and equipped with critical resources, [and] which also makes use of other empirical sciences, **standing**

over the intellectual chaos and seeking to master it. We name this science today by a century old concept, Bibliothekswissenschaft. We call it this because the place of the collection of literature, the library, is also literature's birthplace, because the elements which form the conditions for its development—writing, and the book with its changing forms of appearance alternating over time—derive their ultimate meaning in the library and its effectiveness.... In its defining features, it is a science of value, that is, **a science of the intellectual values laid down in the literature.** If you wanted to express its essence in as concise a definition as possible, you could say: library science **is the investigation of literary monuments with regard to the conditions, the nature, and the consequences of their creation, their dissemination, and their use.** Its goal, just like every other science, is to know the truth, which in this case is the truth of the value of literary monuments. (Eichler 1923, 6–7; emphasis mine)

Harnack on library science:

“Library Science as Science of Value”—here I must stop already. **The highly debatable “library science”** certainly also has to do with value judgments—which human science does not?—but this is not characteristic of it.

When the poet stepped before Zeus, the world was already divided; likewise, if the librarian steps before Science, he finds it already assigned to particular scientific disciplines. **No, Eichler pleads: he says that it is a “science over the sciences.”** But if there really is such a science, it has long been in the hands of the philosophers, or rather the sociologists, and they don't think at all about relinquishing or parceling out the task given to them. What remains, then, of library science?

Library science, enlivened by the love of books, is the sum of the knowledge of the library and the book in itself—one can also call it a science—out of which comes **the art of finding, collecting, conserving, and showing interested parties how to use books for themselves.** The final purpose is the primary and ultimate purpose of this “science”—it is altogether focused upon **service.** (Harnack 1923, 532–3; emphasis mine)

Eichler on library politics:

And this new world of facts appears in library politics, which we have to consider from the standpoint of world politics. The goal of this world politics appears to be worldview.

By library politics we understand the practical application of the principles of the value of literary monuments researched by library science. (Eichler 1923, 11)

Harnack on library politics:

The librarian should chart his course on the basis of the guidelines 1) that the library must **let its sun shine “on the good and bad,”** 2) that on the other hand following the real current rate of research, it allow as much space as possible for the **works of genius and the great talents,** and 3) that it must consider the **needs of posterity,** since nobody else considers this.

In this way the transition from selection to library politics is established. If **selection determines library politics,** it cannot be more determined than has been remarked here; because what will become of libraries, if here the liberal, there the conservative, here the old-fashioned, there the modern, here the materialist, there the vitalist, here the Catholic, there the dissident, etc., has the greatest say? (Harnack 1923, 535–6; emphasis is mine)

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The Role of the Theological Library in Scholarly Formation

A Case Study

Jessica Chisholm Holland, Librarian, Baptist University College of Osteopathic Medicine

Carisse Mickey Berryhill, Professor Emerita, Brown Library, Abilene Christian University

ABSTRACT: Scholarly formation of seminary students has parallels to the discipline of spiritual formation, primarily in offering the seeker a structured set of practices toward the goal of maturity. In a religious order, a candidate seeking spiritual maturity enters a community whose rule of life forms the candidate through spiritual disciplines of worship, prayer, study, confession, and service. In the academic setting, the *telos* of scholarly maturity involves librarians as members of the formational community which admits aspiring scholars to the academic disciplines of the curriculum, such as reading, study, courses and fieldwork, and writing, alongside community exercises of worship, meals, and prayer.

We have both formerly worked as librarians at Harding School of Theology (HST) in Memphis, Tennessee. In August 2023, Harding University announced plans to move the Harding School of Theology to the university's main campus in Searcy, Arkansas. To give the HST community an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of its 66-year presence in Memphis, the seminary planned a Homecoming in April 2024 and invited presentations from alumni about the seminary's contributions to various scholarly disciplines. Dr. Berryhill was asked to present a study of the L. M. Graves Memorial Library's contributions to theological scholarship. That April 2024 presentation gave rise to this presentation, in which we describe the role of the librarians in the intentional formation of scholars.

SCHOLARLY FORMATION'S PARALLELS TO SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The maturing of scholars is in some ways parallel to the discipline of spiritual formation. Both these transformative processes have a *telos*, an end toward which the process aims, that is, a maturity that equips the candidate for a life of service in community and in the world. Second, both processes receive candidates who desire formation into a *community*. Third, the community defines and governs intentional practices, or *disciplines*, by which the candidate is shaped toward the *telos*, whether that end is spiritual maturity or scholarship.

THE *TELOS* OF SCHOLARLY FORMATION AT HST

In the academic world, maturity is called scholarship. Scholarship is participation in intellectual discourse in a disciplinary community which has conventions of inquiry and standards of authority, namely advancement of knowledge, governed by peer review. A scholar is someone whose wide and deep knowledge has produced recognized advancement in their discipline. A scholar becomes an authority by building an outstanding record of achievement recognized by their peers.

The Mission Statement on the 2024 HST website says that it “challenges Christian leaders to develop deeper faith in God and higher standards of ministry and scholarship.” It “challenges Christian leaders to integrate spiritual growth, ministry experience, and rigorous scholarship.” The website’s “About Us” page asserts, “We hope to build leaders who can build communities, all through the power of Scripture scholarship and academic rigor.” The online catalog of Harding School of Theology says it “provides quality training for excellence in ministry and scholarship. We offer strong biblical and theological scholarship that is seasoned with a commitment to ministry. Consequently, our mission is to produce biblically informed and spiritually mature men and women who will devote themselves to long-term ministry.” (HST 2024)

So, Harding School of Theology sees itself as an academic community that intends to form students by a system of discipline as scholars for service to the churches.

THE FORMATIONAL COMMUNITY AT HST

People desiring formation seek a community which will be partners in the seeker's transformation. Who are the formational members? In Catholic religious orders, for example, the person seeking spiritual formation enters a covenanted community to live according to a community rule, such as the *Rule of St. Benedict*. While various traditions and communities have varying rules for their members, they all have covenantal rules which vest authority in the community, and to which the entering candidate vows obedience. The communities also have senior members whose responsibility it is to lead and govern the community, its work, and its worship. Modern universities, which evolved from these historic communities, have parallel community structures.

In modern academic settings, the authority of the community lies not in the church but in its accreditation, that is, recognition by peer institutions in its accrediting association. The association develops and expresses a set of standards to which member institutions (and their libraries) agree to conform and to which member institutions hold each other accountable. These standards and the policies to implement them are communicated to prospective students by the school's catalog, which prescribes degree plans, the courses of study, and the regulations which govern the faculty and students.

At HST, the faculty, including the librarians, govern the curriculum by developing it, approving changes, and deciding together what degree programs and requirements will meet the needs of the students and the accreditation standards. The classroom faculty and the library faculty serve on committees together. Together they support research and the development of the library for the sake of the curriculum. The head librarian is the collection development officer, scouring publication notices, reviews, and catalogs, as well as receiving recommendations and requests from classroom faculty, students, alumni, and other researchers. From 1962 to 2023, the library collection grew from 7,000 to 177,000 volumes, including ebooks.

Community life in many seminaries before the internet age was primarily residential. Although commuting students from the region also enrolled, HST steadily increased student housing spaces on campus from the 1960s through the 1990s. From 1962 until her marriage

in 1978, the founding librarian Annie May Lewis (née Alston) lived on campus as well, and even brought her mother to live with her there. “I thought I was the most blessed of all the faculty members because I lived with the students day in and day out,” she wrote in 1996 (Lewis 1996, 1). A classroom building also included a kitchen, a student lounge, a heritage room, and a large auditorium. Campus life also included daily worship in the chapel in the historic Mansion, which served as the offices for faculty and staff.

The campus community included not only the faculty but also the staff and a student association. HST relied on enthusiastic support from Memphis-area congregations for meals, events, and fundraisers. The faculty served as elders, ministers, counselors, and teachers in these congregations. The professors wrote and spoke not only for the academy but also for the churches. Students also served as ministers and teachers in many of these congregations.

THE FORMATIONAL DISCIPLINES AT HST

Traditional spiritual formation includes community and individual exercises of worship, prayer, study, confession, and service.

Scholarly formation at HST includes, first of all, a curriculum developed and owned by the faculty. The foundation of that curriculum is a research methods course required of students in the first nine hours of their degree program. Since 1968, the head librarian at Harding School of Theology has taught this three-hour course. The course introduces students to graduate study in general, to the library’s personnel and physical plant, to theological research tools such as reference books and databases, and to conventions of writing and documentation expected by the classroom faculty. In 2022, a DMin introductory course was added, taught by the librarian and the DMin director, on the purpose, methods, and skills of ministry research.

After these foundational experiences establish a relationship with the library and librarians, students consult frequently with the librarians for help in research and writing. This relationship continues long after the students graduate and enter careers in ministry or academic work. Graduates have lifetime borrowing privileges and alumni access to databases.

As the school, like other seminaries, has adopted remote and hybrid course models, the library has used endowment income to purchase ebooks and database subscriptions. The library “computer lab” has been converted to a “smart classroom” for both remote/hybrid teaching and for conventional instruction.

Scholarly formation of students outside of classes also includes reading and conversation. In successive renovations, the library has taken pains to include spaces for coffee and conversation, group work, use of electronic resources, and reading.

The faculty in the classroom and in the library model scholarship, select resources such as textbooks and field experiences, teach courses, direct reading and research, evaluate student work, supervise student assistants, and mentor developing scholars by including them in conferences, writing, and publishing opportunities.

These formative practices have produced scholars in universities and seminaries, as well as ministers whose scholarship benefits the church.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Several attendees expressed appreciation for the usefulness of the parallel between spiritual and scholarly formation.

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PANEL PRESENTATIONS

CRRA

The Past, the Present, and the Future

Mark Shelton, Director of Library Services, College of the Holy Cross

Brian Morin, Library Director, Mount Angel Abbey

Gillian Harrison Cain, Director of Member Programs, Atla

ABSTRACT: This report discusses the integration of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) into Atla, focusing on the history of CRRA, its current state within Atla, and the future outlook for this collaboration. Opportunities and challenges are presented.

INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the integration of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) into Atla, focusing on the history of CRRA, its current state within Atla, and the future outlook for this collaboration. The report is based on a presentation by Mark Shelton (College of the Holy Cross), Brian Morin (Mount Angel Abbey Library), and Gillian Harrison Cain (Atla), all of whom have played significant roles in this process. The integration has brought together two organizations with aligned missions and goals, promising to enhance access to Catholic resources and further the academic work of scholars in theology and religious studies.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CRRA

The Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) was founded in 2008 by eight institutions, each with significant Catholic archives and special collections. These institutions recognized the need to create a centralized and enduring global access point to Catholic resources in America. The mission of CRRA was ambitious: to bring together resources from diverse institutions, ensuring that scholars, students, and the general public could access these invaluable materials.

From its inception, CRRA focused on collaborative development of systems and services to make Catholic resources widely accessible. One of the most significant achievements of CRRA has been the development of the Catholic Portal, a centralized platform that aggregates unique, specialized archival information. This portal, which includes contributions from many institutions, has become an essential tool for researchers interested in Catholic studies.

Another key initiative under CRRA was the creation of the Catholic News Archive, which sought to digitize and provide open access to Catholic newspapers and other diocesan publications. The initiative identified over 800 titles for potential inclusion in the archive and worked diligently to negotiate with copyright holders and secure grants for digitization. A significant part of this work involved creating detailed metadata at the article level to maximize accessibility.

THE PRESENT: CRRA WITHIN ATLA

The integration of CRRA into Atla represents a strategic alliance designed to leverage the strengths of both organizations. The integration process was marked by extensive discussions between CRRA and Atla leaders, facilitated by shared goals and a history of collaboration. Gillian Harrison Cain highlighted the benefits of this integration, noting that Atla's established technical infrastructure and administrative support systems have allowed CRRA members to focus more on their core mission—engaging with the community and expanding the use of Catholic resources. This effort has also created opportunities to expand the scope of the existing CRRA initiatives, such as the Catholic News Archive, and to explore similar projects within other denominations.

The integration has also provided a platform for CRRA to connect more effectively with a broader academic community. Brian Morin pointed out that one of the current tasks is to harmonize the resources and technological capabilities of Atla with the specialized needs of CRRA. For instance, the transition of CRRA's LibGuides to Atla's platform is an example of how the integration is facilitating resource consolidation while maintaining the distinct identity and mission of CRRA.

The effort has been met with overwhelmingly positive responses from the member institutions. Approximately 85% of the original 45 CRRA member institutions are now also members of Atla, demonstrating the perceived value of the integration. The remaining institutions are still in discussion about their future involvement, but the overall trend is one of growing collaboration and shared resources.

A CRRA Program Committee, made up of CRRA and Atla representatives, has been charged with building a strong community of support within Atla. The committee will also evaluate the scope and use of CRRA programs and services. This will allow the committee to also advise Atla on the development of new services and resources in support of the Catholic research community.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, the future of CRRA within Atla is full of potential. The integration is expected to yield significant benefits not just for CRRA and Atla but also for the broader academic and religious communities. The collaboration opens up possibilities for new initiatives, such as the potential development of denominational archives for other religious groups, modeled after the success of the Catholic News Archive.

Mark Shelton emphasized that the ongoing work involves not just maintaining but expanding the scope of CRRA's projects. This includes continuing the digitization and metadata work for the Catholic News Archive and exploring ways to engage more deeply with the academic community through conferences, workshops, and collaborative research projects. The commitment to keeping CRRA's resources open and free is another critical aspect of the

future strategy. Atla's support ensures that these resources remain accessible to a global audience, thus fulfilling CRRA's original mission of creating enduring global access to Catholic resources. Work has already begun with transitioning web resources and platforms, as well as re-imagining subcommittees.

Additionally, the integration has strengthened the community of scholars and librarians focused on Catholic studies. By bringing together CRRA's specialized focus and Atla's broader theological mission, the merged organization is better positioned to support professional development, foster collaboration, and advance theological research.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA) into Atla represents a significant step forward in the effort to provide comprehensive access to Catholic resources. The history of CRRA, its current integration with Atla, and the future prospects for this collaboration demonstrate the potential for academic and religious institutions to work together in innovative ways. This effort not only preserves the unique contributions of CRRA, but also enhances its capacity to serve a broader community, ensuring that these vital resources remain accessible for generations to come.

As this integration continues to evolve, it will be essential to monitor the outcomes and ensure that both organizations continue to meet the needs of their members and the wider community. The success of this integration will depend on the continued collaboration and commitment of all involved, and it serves as a model for how similar organizations might come together to achieve common goals.

Exploring Theological Librarianship

Insights from the Next Generation

Jessica Boyer, Director of the Library, Mount St. Mary's University

Andy Lofthus, Information Services Librarian, Western Seminary

Elizabeth Miller, Coordinator of Digital Initiatives, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University

Emily Peterson, Director of Public Services, Columbia Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: This panel featured four individuals who, despite being relatively young, each have meaningful experiences in the field of theological education and libraries. The panelists reflected on their diverse pathways to theological librarianship and delved into the field's current landscape, including emerging trends, technological advancements, and changing user expectations. Towards the end of the session, panelists turned their attention to professional associations, such as Atla, and discussed their role in our development and growth.

INTRODUCTION

This session was inspired after seeing what appeared to be attendance at Atla Annual trending younger in recent years. We organized this panel to give a voice to younger members of the profession and provide an opportunity for the larger Atla membership to get to know our generation, our collective views on the field, and our hopes for the future. Organized as a series of questions and answers, this session allowed each panelist to reflect on their pathway into the profession, current trends in the field, and our hopes for the future of the field and the association.

CAN YOU SHARE YOUR PERSONAL PATHWAY INTO THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANSHIP? WHAT/WHO INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE THIS CAREER PATH?

Andy Lofthus

I was inspired to become a theological librarian through meeting with my undergrad reference librarian, herself a member of Atla, and hearing her describe her work. I love being a sounding board for other people's ideas—especially related to philosophy and theology—and getting to combine that with collecting resources and equipping people to navigate resources made theological librarianship an ideal career.

Jessica Boyer

My journey into theological librarianship is a unique one. It began at Mount St. Mary's University, where I currently work. Initially, my dream was to be a National Park Service ranger. However, an internship at a park led me to their library and archives, a role I found deeply fulfilling. I continued to work part-time in the university archives during my junior and senior years, graduating with a double major in history and German. Upon graduation, I was hired in the library full-time in a paraprofessional role and completed my MLS degree online through Clarion University. As I finished my MLS, our then-director retired, and I was asked to serve as interim director before being offered the permanent position. Since 2017, I have been serving as the Director of the Library at Mount St. Mary's University. I have also completed my PhD in Higher Education Leadership from Concordia University Chicago. My journey into theological librarianship was not a direct pursuit but a natural progression as I have worked to support my campus's seminary and theological degree programs.

Elizabeth Miller

I originally came into theological education pursuing a Master of Divinity degree and thinking I would seek ordination as a Deacon in the United Methodist Church with the goal of serving in non-traditional ministry settings like camping ministry or a faith-based nonprofit. Once I got to school, however, I landed a job in the archives

as a manuscript processing assistant. After a semester of school and work, I realized I was enjoying the work I was doing in the library more than my experiential coursework and applied to switch into the Master of Theological Studies program. In that program, I could still gain subject matter expertise in theology, but be able to finish a year earlier and begin my library degree and the path to professional librarianship. After completing my theology degree and starting my library program, I worked in archival acquisitions while seeking work in a theological library. In 2019, I joined Pitts Theology Library as the Reserves and Circulation Specialist and in 2022 became the inaugural Coordinator of Digital Initiatives. Through the last five years, I have found that librarianship, particularly in a theological education setting, is its own form of ministry that brings me much joy and satisfaction. Ultimately, I am realizing that I've come full circle on my initial goals from entering theology school and have found my ministry niche in theological librarianship.

Emily Peterson

I am a relative newcomer to theological librarianship, with just one year spent in the field so far, but I have been in the world of theological education for approximately a decade. After graduating from Columbia Theological Seminary in 2016 with my Master of Divinity, I felt a pull toward working in higher education and had the opportunity to answer that pull in an administrative position at Columbia, followed by three and a half years directing the seminary's Center for Academic Literacy (CAL). This work in academic literacy particularly aligned with my interests and values, particularly the delightful process of thinking collaboratively with our students in one-on-one coaching sessions. Eventually, however, I realized that the elements of the CAL director position that most energized me—such as clarifying and focusing questions and ideas, making connections, and bringing additional voices into the conversation—were actually quintessential elements of librarianship, especially in reference functions, and that pursuing librarianship would give me the chance to sink even deeper and more skillfully into those elements I so valued. In 2022, I graduated from the University of South Carolina's iSchool with a Master of Library and Information Science, and in 2023 had the unexpected opportunity to return to Columbia as the Director of Public Services in the library. The decision to pursue librarianship has been repeatedly validated for me, and I find great joy and

fulfillment in accompanying our patron communities (especially our students) as they learn and discern, helping them develop the skills and connect them with the resources that will enrich their journeys.

WHAT ARE THE EMERGING TRENDS YOUR LIBRARY IS WORKING ON?

Andy Lofthus

As a small library, we have a limited capacity to pursue or set new trends. However, because we are small, we often must think critically and creatively about how to be more effective in our service. One emerging trend we have explored and found beneficial is controlled digital lending.

Jessica Boyer

Recently, I have been focused on how to scale library services while staffing levels remain flat. Demand for library services at my institution is at an all-time high, with the number of students receiving library instruction up 47% over the last academic year and 257% over the last seven years. How do we meet demand in a manageable way for our team? Some answers we have been looking to include (1) being intentional about what we say “yes” to and what we say “no” to, (2) reconfiguring practices and streamlining workflows, and (3) embracing new technologies to help us be more efficient.

Elizabeth Miller

At Pitts, we are fortunate to have an abundance of resources and staff to take on new projects and explore emerging trends. While there are others, I want to emphasize our focus on leveraging “the digital” to broaden access to our collections and staff expertise. In 2019, the library hired a Digital Scholarship Librarian and a Project Digital Asset Librarian to develop a digital repository, which culminated in the Pitts Digital Collections website (digital.pitts.emory.edu). The site houses the library’s digital special collections materials, digital exhibitions, virtual versions of gallery exhibitions, and digital assets from past library workshops. Additionally, having this platform enabled us to host large digital collections like the Howard Thurman audio archive and the Day1 sermon recording archive. Beyond digital collections, a team of three Pitts staff redesigned

and deployed a new library website built from scratch. Outside the library, Pitts has partnered with the Candler Foundry, Candler's center for public theological education, and the Association for Hispanic Theological Education (AETH) to provide the infrastructure to share digital theological resources with students of the Foundry and AETH institutions.

Emily Peterson

Over the past year that I've been at Columbia, a major emerging trend that has featured in my work has been artificial intelligence. The public release of ChatGPT in particular raised concern among faculty, administration, and students about how to respond in defense of scholarly integrity. So, I and a team of colleagues were tasked with the development of the seminary's first-ever policy governing student academic use of AI. While this work and the resulting policy did not ultimately determine our *library's* response to AI in our daily practices, the library did demonstrate leadership in helping the institution navigate these early days of generative AI and its impact on theological education, and it led us to start considering a larger slate of recommendations for the seminary related to AI literacy, pedagogical pivots, and additional policies.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES YOU ARE SEEING IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AT YOUR INSTITUTION AND HOW IS THE LIBRARY RESPONDING TO THOSE CHANGES?

Andy Lofthus

One of the biggest changes I've seen is the shift toward the majority of students being remote, often never stepping foot on campus, let alone the library. With a limited budget and to serve all students well, we changed our collection development policy to purchase ebook over print books, all things being equal.

Jessica Boyer

As a Catholic university, our faith has always been foundational to our educational experience and curriculum. I am seeing an increase in the prioritization of faith-based approaches and interdisciplinary work at the intersection of faith. This interdisciplinary work is an

opportunity for the library to lead. When we see these conversations happening on campus, we should seek opportunities to join them, noting that we have resources to support this work and can help.

Elizabeth Miller

At Candler, we recently began offering hybrid Masters-level programs, adding to the existing hybrid Doctor of Ministry program. As part of that process, librarians worked to create course material acquisitions policies to meet the research and access needs of remote students. A coworker and I presented on this process during the COVID-19 pandemic at the 2022 Atla Annual conference in Baltimore, and you can find more specifics about those policies in our proceedings. To summarize, though, we tailored our course material acquisitions policy to match the course format (e.g., the library will purchase unlimited access ebooks, if they are available, for courses being taught in a fully online or hybrid format but will purchase physical books for courses being held in-person). Because of this policy, our ebook acquisitions generally duplicate the physical collections of the library. Unless there is not a physical copy available, the library will not purchase a resource as an ebook only. Since the introduction of hybrid programs, librarians have had to do many reviews of collecting policies to meet our community's needs.

Emily Peterson

Columbia has experienced a rapid and remarkable diversification in its student body in recent years, especially (but not only) in terms of denominational and international representation. One of the trends that this reflects is the falling numbers among American mainline Protestants, including Presbyterians, especially among younger Americans. The John Bulow Campbell Library at Columbia has always tried to include diverse perspectives in our collection, but the library has welcomed further development of diverse voices in the collection to match these more recent changes, especially as this diversification has helped the seminary evolve its curriculum. To this end, our Bibliographic Access Services department has established, and is in current pursuit of, relationships with global partners, including Langham Publishing and several Nigerian bookstores to help us add more African voices to the collection, as well as potential agreements with Korean sister institutions. We are also engaged in

concerted efforts to make our space and staff more interculturally welcoming, such as through programs, outreach, staff development, and even the artwork that adorns our spaces.

HOW DO WE OBSERVE THE DYNAMICS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PLAYING OUT IN OUR VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIBRARY'S RESPONSE AND PARTICIPATION IN INITIATIVES?

Andy Lofthus

One particular instance of this at my seminary is the growing number of students pursuing ministry as a second career. While the majority of students at our seminary already have a background in ministry or theological studies, students pursuing ministry as a second career often lack a frame of reference, unsure of the world they're stepping into with its theologians, denominations, commentaries, etc. When meeting with these students I try to provide that frame of reference (e.g., explaining the different categories of commentaries) and suggest works that can familiarize them with this world (e.g., commentary surveys).

Jessica Boyer

The university is seeing a significant increase in the diversity of our student body. In looking specifically at our theological degree programs, the Seminary's ESL program was recently accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation. Additionally, our undergraduate theology programs have been working to update their curriculum to include traditionally underrepresented voices. In the library, we have focused on DEI specifically in the areas of collection development and hiring.

Elizabeth Miller

At Pitts, we have undertaken several projects to be more inclusive and remove harmful language from our resource descriptions. The Cataloging and Metadata Librarian and Collection Management Coordinator worked together to remove racist Library of Congress classification cutters from parts of our collection. For example, the project replaced the .N4 cutter with .A35 or .B5, and the .O7 cutter

with .A82. These reclassifications were not always possible, due to items not fitting into the new cutter options, but the team reclassified as many as they could while still being accurate. Pitts staff have also taken leadership in implementing the Homosaurus, a linked vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) terms, across all Emory libraries.

Emily Peterson

One of the most ambitious and impactful DEI initiatives at Columbia recently has been our Repairing the Breach initiative, which was launched in June 2020. This initiative grew out of a recognition that Columbia has historical ties to slavery and that, in repentance of that history and in a good faith effort to be more just and faithful moving forward, the seminary needs to take tangible steps to directly address the harm that slavery and its aftermath have done to Black people and communities. One of the major components of this initiative is a scholarship that offers tuition-free education for Black students admitted to Columbia's master's-level degree programs.

A great gift of this initiative has been a student body that has grown more diverse not only internationally, as previously noted, but also racially and denominationally. Now that the library supports more students of color in their studies than ever before in our history, we have a responsibility to develop a collection that speaks richly to the histories, theologies, worship resources, and more that reflect the experiences of these students. We have been intentionally seeking these types of resources in our acquisitions processes, but we also ask our students and faculty to be generous with their purchase requests as they encounter resources outside the library that they think we ought to have, and we say yes to as much of that as we possibly can. This is one way we work with our community to become a dynamic and supportive educational partner for our students and faculty as part of this larger initiative.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANS EVOLVING IN THE NEXT DECADE, CONSIDERING TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS, AND CHANGING USER EXPECTATIONS?

Andy Lofthus

While not necessarily new roles, I think there will be an increasing need (in light of ever-increasing information and misinformation) for librarians to be curators of resources for their communities and instructors in information literacy.

Jessica Boyer

Perhaps more short-term than the next decade, we should look to deeper collaborations and support of discipline faculty. Faculty have just recovered from the pandemic and its long-term impacts on our students and now they are navigating AI. How can the library collaborate to help pick up some of that burden and continue to demonstrate our value and relevance on a campuswide scale? How can the library lead in areas such as AI, open educational resources (OERs), and open in general?

Elizabeth Miller

Over the past few years, we have seen increasing numbers of students needing help navigating the “hidden curriculum” of graduate theological education and higher education more broadly. Students arriving in our programs come from various backgrounds and bring a wealth of knowledge from different fields and experiences, but many do not arrive with the specific theological background their faculty may expect or assume. To offer students some of this foundational information, Pitts staff created zines to hand out during the in-person orientation attended by all students, regardless of their hybrid/in-person status. The zines include some basic theological terms, like *exegesis* and *critical*, a research primer and graphic, tips and tricks from other Candler students, and guides on how to make the best use of the library and its resources. We received positive feedback about the zines and plan to do them again in the years ahead.

Emily Peterson

Despite the constant anxiety that libraries will become defunct in light of rapid technological development, I believe our role as librarians becomes ever more important when it comes to info literacy in a saturated and overcomplicated info landscape. In the library at Columbia, we have had students come to us and say, “I know how to find stuff—I just don’t know how to tell if it’s *good*.” While the designation of “good” may require some more critical reflection, the underlying challenge remains that there’s so much out there to be found, and it is a mixed bag. Helping to develop the tools of information literacy that allow students (and, frankly, all our patrons, including faculty) to navigate their search for information with more skill and confidence is something that we offer that has only become more essential over time.

HOW CAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES ADAPT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A MORE DIGITALLY CONNECTED AND GLOBALIZED USER BASE?*Andy Lofthus*

As most of the students I work with are remote, I’ve tried to find ways to make my interactions with them more personal. One of the ways I’ve done that is through making short (one to two minutes) screencasts in response to their emails. This has made my communication clearer and more personal, and student feedback has been positive.

Jessica Boyer

We need to find additional ways to collaborate and share resources. Many institutions and libraries are struggling with unsustainable financial models. This challenge looks different in various institutions around the globe, but it is a common struggle. We must be intentional about thinking through ways to support each other.

Elizabeth Miller

At Pitts, we have had many discussions about the resources available to remote students versus in-person students. Through those discussions, we concluded that remote students have a fundamentally different library than on-campus students, partly because of

the availability of ebooks and electronic resources versus physical items, and partly because of the way we interact with electronic interfaces. I think one of the most important things we can do as librarians and educators is to be straightforward and realistic, when working with our patrons or enrolling them in hybrid programs, about the disparity in resources. By acknowledging our limitations, we offer patrons accurate information and set realistic expectations for when they begin using online library resources.

Emily Peterson

The broadening of the user base can pressure our libraries to be everything to everyone, a daunting prospect especially for theological libraries, which trend smaller and more focused. To adapt to these realities, it is important to leverage our strengths and acknowledge our limits, to continuously learn from one another, and to be intentional about assessing patron needs, preferences, and patterns of usage and access to make sure that we are putting our resources and energy toward the resources and services that best match our users.

WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU EMPLOY TO STAY CURRENT WITH THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS IN OUR FIELD?

Andy Lofthus

To stay current, I use a combination of listservs, catalogs, conferences and their proceedings, and talking with other librarians.

Jessica Boyer

I follow library Twitter, browse listservs, and follow updates from professional associations.

Elizabeth Miller

I mostly stay current by chatting with coworkers about their professional activities and associations, as well as monitoring listservs for information (and drama). I also enjoy following social media accounts of professional organizations, like library Twitter. I want to specifically give a shoutout to ALA's *American Libraries* print

magazine; I love reading the physical magazine and paging through for fun and creative ideas!

Emily Peterson

I try to take advantage of listservs (through professional associations and otherwise), particularly those that offer learning opportunities like webinars. I also draw on collegial connections and conversations, and where a deep dive is needed, I sometimes dive into a book.

WE HAVE A LOT OF OPTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS—ACADEMIC AND FAITH-BASED ONES. SO, WHY ATLA? WHAT IS IT ABOUT ATLA THAT KEEPS US ENGAGED?

Andy Lofthus

I love Atla because while the schools and seminaries we come from can be very different (e.g., a small evangelical seminary versus a large mainline seminary), the work we do as theological librarians is very similar. That combination of similarities and differences makes for consistently fruitful conversations.

Jessica Boyer

I became involved in Atla after meeting Atla's Director of Membership & Engagement, Gillian Harrison Cain, in the exhibit hall at ACRL 2017. I started volunteering with Atla in 2020 when I joined the Conference Committee. Atla's outstanding community of members keeps me engaged. I have found a welcoming community within the association and a generosity of spirit within the membership. Everyone has always been happy to lend some advice and often introduces me to additional members to help. Atla also does an excellent job of keeping up with the latest trends and innovations. Atla has been a leader in AI and libraries among professional library associations. These innovations keep me engaged and returning to Atla for my professional development and learning.

Elizabeth Miller

I value Atla because it has always been a place I've felt welcome and part of the community. I appreciate that Atla is small enough that we can get to know others, while also being known in return. As many of us know, library school does not prepare you for the specifics of working in a library and the variety of issues we encounter. Through the years, I've been able to reach out to colleagues I've met at Atla to help think through issues that are unique to theological libraries and come up with creative solutions together. Those kinds of relationships are what keep me coming back to Atla each year.

Emily Peterson

Atla's specificity is powerful. The uniqueness of theological librarianship makes it incredibly valuable to know, learn from, and collaborate with colleagues who live in our subfield as well. Yet the breadth of our theological library contexts also allows us to learn from institutions that are different in scale, model, and theology than our own. That balance of similarity and difference creates a really rich community of mutual support and learning.

HOW DO PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, SUCH AS ATLA, SUPPORT YOUR DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH AS A THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIAN? CAN YOU SHARE ANY VALUABLE EXPERIENCES OR RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THESE ASSOCIATIONS?

Andy Lofthus

Two ways that I've felt most supported by Atla are the personal/professional connections it's allowed me to make and the opportunities it's provided me to participate (e.g., presenting at conferences, being a member of a committee, etc.). This is the most welcoming and supportive professional association I know.

Jessica Boyer

I am the only panelist without a degree in theology. I also work at a comprehensive university. When I first started attending Atla Annual, I did not think of myself as a theological librarian any more than I was a business or a science librarian. However, Atla has helped me gain confidence in my work in supporting our theological degree

programs. Attending Atla Annual and reading Atla publications, especially past *Summary of Proceedings*, have been valuable resources and given me confidence and proficiencies in completing collection development and reference for our theological degree programs.

Elizabeth Miller

Atla has been incredible for me to grow professionally and try out new things. Since joining a few years ago, I have had the opportunity to present at several Atla annual conferences, write a book review for *Theological Librarianship*, and contribute to an edited volume with Atla Open Press. I am so grateful that Atla has been a safe space for me to try things, learn from peers, and receive constructive feedback in order to grow professionally and make connections with colleagues around the world.

Emily Peterson

I attended Atla in my first month as a theological librarian, and it was an immensely valuable experience in terms of building a community of colleagues, learning more about the field, and gathering ideas and information to implement as I hit the ground running.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ATLA IN FOSTERING COLLABORATION, INNOVATION, AND EXCELLENCE IN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANSHIP?

Andy Lofthus

There are many things Atla can and should do, but my hope is that the organization always remembers its core strength: the members of its community and their relationships with one another. In my mind, investing in ways to foster community among its members is an investment in all that Atla does.

Jessica Boyer

Atla's suite of research tools are outstanding resources that continue to evolve and expand. I also appreciate members' opportunities to get to know the metadata team in recent years through presentations at Atla Annual, blog posts, and webinars. This relationship with

librarians and product creators is unique to Atla and is one of the ways I see Atla as a leader in the library vendor space.

Elizabeth Miller

I keep joking about starting a Discord for Atla folks to stay in touch throughout the year in a more informal way, but I think I might actually start one this year! I always have such a great time getting to know folks at Atla Annual but lose touch until the following summer. As I mentioned before, one of my favorite things about Atla is the relatively small size and sense of community, so keeping those communication channels going outside the conference would be a huge benefit for me.

Emily Peterson

I would love to see how we can foster relationship-building year-round so that we can keep the flow of mutual learning and support running outside of Atla Annual. I deeply appreciate remote or self-led learning opportunities like webinars and articles, but I especially value real-time conversation as a means of learning. Fostering that through perhaps the formation of short-term cohorts or small discussion groups could be a huge asset to Atla participants.

How Doomed Are We?

A Philosophical/Theological Consideration of AI/ChatGPT in Relation to Theological Libraries and Theological Education

Brady Alan Beard, Ph.D. (he/him), Reference and Instruction Librarian, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology

Allison Graham, Reference and Research Librarian, Princeton Theological Seminary

Emily Peterson (she/her), Director of Public Services, John Bulow Campbell Library, Columbia Theological Seminary

David Schmersal, Access and Instruction Librarian, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: How should theological librarians think about and respond to the advent of AI in theological education? What role(s) might theological librarians have in this brave new world? How is AI similar to, and different from, other information technology revolutions (writing, printing, the internet)? Should institutions of theological education consider pursuing a kind of new monasticism, leaving the decadent dystopia into which we seem to be heading for the purity of quill and parchment? While we may be unable to provide definite answers, this session offers a forum for raising, considering, and discussing these and related questions.

This panel explores the challenges raised by AI in theological education by considering four key questions, each addressed in turn by a member of the panel:

- 1) “How is AI similar to, and different from, other information technology revolutions (writing, printing, the internet)?” (David Schmersal)
- 2) “How should theological librarians think about and respond to the advent of AI in theological education?” (Allison Graham)
- 3) “What role(s) might theological librarians have in this brave new world?” (Brady Beard)

- 4) “Should institutions of theological education consider pursuing a kind of new monasticism, leaving the decadent dystopia into which we seem to be heading for the purity of quill and parchment? Why or why not?” (Emily)

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

We start by defining a few key terms which are central to the discussion: *artificial intelligence* and *GPT*.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines artificial intelligence (AI) as “the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings” (Copeland, 2024). This seems clear enough, yet as Williams asserts, “The very term ‘Artificial Intelligence’ contains assumptions about the nature of intelligence (or consciousness), and who or what can have it—assumptions with no agreed-upon criteria, and a not uncontroversial history of application” (Williams 2023a, 106). As McGilchrist suggests, a more accurate term for AI may be “artificial information processing” (McGilchrist 2024). To illustrate the distinction using an analogy: A calculator can tell you that you owe \$7,000 in taxes; an accountant can understand why this might be unsettling.

Moreover, as Hanegan and Rosser helpfully elucidate, AI is not monolithic, but may be classified as *Analytical*, which leverage incredible amounts of data for dynamic circumstances and real-time decision-making (e.g., recommendation engines like Amazon, auto-complete/auto-correct, Optical Character Recognition), and *Generative*, which can respond to crafted prompts and create content in various modalities (text, audio, video, images, code, etc.) that did not previously exist (Hanegan and Rosser 2023).

On perhaps somewhat more familiar ground, Herzfeld notes parallels between the three development paradigms of AI and three approaches to defining *Imago Dei*: substantial, functional, and relational. Just as the *Imago Dei* can be defined as a property humans have (reason), as a task we perform (exercise of dominion), or on the basis of relationality (grounded in the Trinity), so also the three

developmental paradigms of AI may be defined as *Substantive* (classic or symbolic AI), seeking to replicate human reason; *Functional*, seeking to augment humans through actions such as accomplishing tasks and solving problems; and *Relational*, seeking to pass the Turing Test, to be indistinguishable from a human being in “conversation” (Herzfeld 2002, 303–310).

GPT

The GPT in *ChatGPT* stands for “generative pretrained transformer.” Its name describes a system of interoperable algorithms that weigh, arrange, and create associative distributions of text. They’re built on large language models . . . developed over the past five years or so, with datasets millions, billions, and now even trillions of words in size. LLMs are trained through deep learning—multiple layers of machine learning operating on and refining one another” (Williams 2023b). As Williams goes on to observe, “It is much easier to see through the mystique of ChatGPT and other AI applications once you understand exactly what they are and what they do. The truth about such algorithms is that they’re literally just sets of instructions. You have a set of standardized operations within which particular weights and measures can be adjusted . . . The recipe for any food—just as for anything you have to make—is an algorithm, too. My favorite algorithm is pumpkin pie” (Williams, 2023b).

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS HERE AND NOW?

Before turning to the four questions around which our discussion is organized, it is fitting to briefly consider why theological librarians are addressing these questions, and why we are doing so now.

Although few of us have technical expertise in AI technologies, it is appropriate for theological librarians to address this topic because the social, technological and economic developments that have made AI possible have theological roots. As Lynn White observes, “technology is at least partly to be explained as an occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man’s transcendence over nature . . . Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious” (White 1967).

And why are we talking about this now? Because the potential ramifications of AI for our libraries, our institutions, and our faith communities are tremendous. As Sigler asserts, the scale of potential social changes instigated by AI will outstrip theologies based on current social conditions, such as liberation theologies (Singler 2017, 221). To paraphrase *Space Balls*, this is happening now.

QUESTION 1. HOW IS AI SIMILAR TO, AND DIFFERENT FROM, OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTIONS (WRITING, PRINTING, THE INTERNET)?

David Schmersal

While many of the technologies that underlie the latest iterations of AI seem relatively new, the questions they raise echo debates that have been going on for quite some time. At the heart of such debates is the question of whether a “new” technology that seems to promise an external aid to memory or a shortcut to knowledge ultimately proves more beneficial or harmful. As Gay rightly observes: “prudence requires us to at least ask whether our technologies are now enabling us to become more of ourselves; whether they are facilitating deeper and more meaningful human relationships; whether they are enabling us to be more dynamically engaged with the world. One suspects that they are not” (Gay 2018, 25).

While it may be somewhat ironic for librarians to say so, one of the earliest forms of technology at the heart of these debates was writing. For librarians, especially theological librarians serving institutions affiliated with “peoples of the book,” the sanctity of the written word is a fundamental value and unquestioned assumption. Yet, as we will see, this has not always been the case, even for figures and books that are pillars of the Western “canon.”

In his critique of writing in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Socrates relates an Egyptian myth in which the god “Theuth (Thoth) claims that writing is a study (μάθημα) that will make the Egyptians wiser and better in memory. Thamus (Ammon) argues that on the contrary, writing will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who rely on it . . . because those who trust in writing will be relying on (something outside of themselves)” (Werner 2012, 285–286).

Eusebius (*HE* 3.39.4) offers a similar example from church history, noting Papias's estimation of the oral testimony of the apostles over the written record. Papias (c. 60–130 CE) perhaps offers a more nuanced assessment of writing as an information technology; he is, after all, known to have written works himself. It is not so much that he considers oral testimony good and written words bad but recognizes the advantage of hearing “the living and surviving voice” (Eusebius 1926, 293). How many New Testament scholars wish they could sit down with Paul and ask what exactly he meant by some of the things he wrote that we find puzzling?

Moving forward in time over a millennium after Papias, the next major development in information technology, the printing press, further illustrates that all such technologies have both benefits and costs, such as the widespread distribution of mass-produced erroneous texts. (For example, consider Francesco Dal Pozzo's inaccurate *editio princeps* of Ovid.¹) This also offers a clear example of the fact that technology is not neutral, that “it can be directed toward good or evil,” and that all such technologies have unintended consequences (Schuurman 2019, 170). As much as the advent of printing is widely, and rightly, celebrated as a catalyst in the spread of knowledge, one wonders if Luther, presented with foreknowledge of the violence of the peasants' revolt, the carnage of religious wars, and the consequent spread of skepticism, might have preferred that his ideas for reform were not publicized quite so widely.

The democratization and spread of knowledge that the printing press enabled has been exponentially enhanced—or exacerbated—by the great development in information technology of our own time: networked computers. Again, while the ubiquity of information may be seen as largely positive, it does have profound, unintended, and largely negative consequences, such as creating dependency and consequent loss of skill. (How many of us rely on GPS to find our way anywhere?) One clear example of this in our own context is Bible software. As much as I love and regularly use Accordance and appreciate how easy it is to quickly look up a word or check parsing, it also makes it all too easy to rely on the software without really wrestling with the text—thereby circumventing the struggle that can lead to insight and understanding.

While in some respects AI may be seen as merely the latest iteration of technologies that seem to replicate, or threaten to replace, aspects of the human mind, there does seem to be a fundamental difference. Whereas books may allow us to store our memory externally (so we need not hold all we know inside ourselves), and computers and the internet facilitate access to vast stores of information, AI seems to circumvent the process of thinking itself by processing the information for us and spitting out something useful.

Moreover, as suggested by McGilchrist in his insightful tome *The Master and His Emissary*, the information processing carried on by AI replicates a left-hemisphere perspective of the world, which seeks to reduce the world to that which can be grasped, mastered, comprehended, and controlled (McGilchrist 2019). This way of perceiving and of being in the world facilitated both the scientific method and the industrial revolution. Just as the industrial revolution reduced man to a machine and the earth to natural resources, so the information revolution that has brought AI equates personhood with intelligence and reduces intelligence to computation. If, as McGilchrist rightly observes, we and our culture have privileged this perspective and this has molded our worldview, then we have not so much created AI in our image as we have created AI based on a partial and distorted vision of ourselves and of reality. This of course has profound implications for theology in particular. AI represents not so much (or at least not merely) a tool that we may adopt and use as it does an expression of a worldview based on incomplete—and therefore erroneous and potentially hazardous—understanding of human beings, of the reality of the world we inhabit, and of being itself.

QUESTION 2. HOW SHOULD THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANS THINK ABOUT AND RESPOND TO THE ADVENT OF AI IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

Allison Graham

This question is undoubtedly one that we all feel the need to address, whether out of our own interest, perplexity, enthusiasm, or worry—or because administrators or faculty at our institutions have told us that we need to have a plan for AI.

First, although it may seem obvious, thinking about AI and its role in theological education is important to avoid more extreme

knee-jerk reactions. On the one hand, there is the call to “keep up with the times,” that libraries and theological institutions need to embrace AI or risk falling behind—although it is unclear what the goal of this great rush is. If I sound dismissive of this approach, it is because my tendency is toward the other extreme, of refusing to engage with AI because it seems to pose so many risks and downsides, and surely it would be better if we could just ignore it. But this refusal to engage does a disservice to our students and faculty who are using or encountering AI regularly and need to find ways to approach these tools in light of the goals and values of theological education. Additionally, not exploring AI risks overlooking genuinely useful AI tools. What I think we need instead is a thoughtful middle way that considers how AI tools can or cannot be used in the service of our theological narratives and institutional values.

In preparing for this presentation, I kept thinking of a quote from Wendell Berry about his approach to technology, “Do I wish to keep up with the times? No. My wish simply is to live my life as fully as I can” (Berry 1990, 90). Given that Berry eschews much of modern technology, including computers and modern farming equipment, I have no doubt that he is very much on the side of refusing to use AI. Nevertheless, I think that his prioritization of living a full life—or, on a communal level, human flourishing—is the right approach to take and can serve as a basic measure for evaluating the uses of technology, even for those of us who use AI and numerous other technologies far more than Berry does.

As my mention of human flourishing and a “middle way” alludes to, I take a virtue ethics approach to AI issues. In my context, working at a Christian seminary, this means that the focus is on living out the Christian story and any engagement with AI should be in the service of this larger purpose. For theological librarians and other theological educators, we also need to consider our role in student formation: How can students develop AI habits that they will maintain and share with the communities that they live in and serve, both during their studies and after graduation?

To help develop these habits, there are several methods for thinking about AI (and technology more broadly) that I find useful. I will present four of these frameworks briefly and then conclude by

considering how these approaches could be applied in the context of theological libraries.

I begin with the most tech-focused of these frameworks, which was written by the twentieth-century Canadian philosopher and media theorist Marshall McLuhan. His tetrad of media effects proposes four questions to consider about media or technology:

- 1) What does it enhance?
- 2) What does it make obsolete?
- 3) What does it retrieve?
- 4) What characteristics does it reverse, when pushed to its limits? (McLuhan 1977)

Although these questions seem simple, they require us to think critically about positive and negative effects of technologies. I find the question of what AI retrieves particularly intriguing, though I have not found a satisfying answer to it yet. These questions can help us think about the effects of technology, and librarians could use them to help students and faculty understand what AI is, and how it is similar and different to other technologies. However, these questions are not aimed at addressing how we should respond to those effects and use technology.

Before turning to the question of response, I want to consider the work of Noreen Herzfeld, a contemporary scholar of religion and technology. In *The Artifice of Intelligence: Divine and Human Relationship in a Robotic Age*, Herzfeld draws on the work of Martin Buber and Karl Barth to discuss the importance of relationality and what makes an authentic I-Thou encounter, which entails looking the other in the eye, speaking and hearing each other, giving mutual assistance, and doing so freely (Herzfeld 2023a). This approach foregrounds values of relational personhood that most of our institutions likely share, and it applies those values to assess uses of AI.

AI and other digital technologies can easily weaken human relationality, so we must make sure that these values remain central and are prioritized over efficiency, cost, novelty, or other factors that are used to sell AI. Librarians should make sure that theological libraries remain spaces for human engagement and connection. I know that students with whom I have a relationship (through library outreach or other involvement on campus) are more likely to come and ask

me reference questions. Seeking out opportunities to build those relationships will be increasingly important as students find it easy to use AI research tools on their own. This can be beneficial, but it can also mean that they might not be using these tools effectively or might assume that these tools are more comprehensive than they are.

Having looked at Herzfeld's relationality-based framework, and McLuhan's tech-focused one, I turn now to a couple of approaches that combine these methods by encouraging us to think about individual and societal uses and impacts of AI. Michael Sacasas is a Christian thinker and author of *The Convivial Society* newsletter about technology and society. In one of his newsletters, he poses 41 questions to ask about technology, including questions such as:

- What sort of person will the use of this technology make me?
- What practices will the use of this technology cultivate?
- What feelings does the use of this technology generate in me towards others?
- Could the resources used to acquire and use this technology be better deployed?
- How does the use of this technology shape my vision of a good life?
- What assumptions about the world does this technology tacitly encourage?
- What would the world be like if everyone used this technology exactly as I use it? (Sacacas 2021)

The questions encourage thinking about the impact of a particular technology on oneself, one's relationship with others, and the world more broadly. (And this need not be exclusive to digital technologies.) Like McLuhan's tetrad, they prompt consideration of positive and negative effects, but they are more focused on helping us think about how to respond to the impact that technology has.

Although I have not tried this yet, librarians could bring these questions to AI workshops that they lead and give students time to think through and discuss at least some of this list. Doing so could help students see AI issues as relevant to their education and ministries and lead them to develop personal philosophies about AI use. Thinking through these questions could also assist faculty and

administrators to develop policies about AI. While the answer to some of these questions might be the same for all types of AI tools, other questions will likely elicit different answers for different products. Thinking through these questions for a variety of AI tools can help ensure that policies reflect the different types of AI and the range of products available.

While Sacasas's questions address communal and global impacts of technology, the questions themselves are directed at individuals. A more societal perspective for thinking about AI can be found in Catholic Social Teaching. This is the approach that the participants in the AI Research Group at the Dicastery for Culture and Education's Centre for Digital Culture propose in their new book *Encountering Artificial Intelligence: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations*. Just as modern Catholic Social Teaching developed in response to the Industrial Revolution, so it should be applied to the AI revolution. The principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which include upholding human dignity, valuing community, justice, solidarity, and care for God's creation, can provide a strong framework for approaching AI. Librarians at Catholic institutions in particular could host book clubs about this book with faculty and students to encourage campus-wide discussions about AI and its uses.

As the authors of *Encountering Artificial Intelligence* write, "the most important aspect of an ethical engagement with AI is what the user does while off-line" (AI Research Group 2024, 229–30). People who are striving to live lives of love, service, prayer, contemplation, and learning will find areas in which AI tools can help them without compromising their values and identity. But people who do not work on these habits will find it easy to offload their efforts onto AI tools, thus making it even harder to develop these skills.

In the library context, we need to address AI, but in our excitement or panic about doing so, we should not lose focus on the ongoing importance of helping students develop information literacy, research, and writing skills, especially when the changing demographics of seminary students can mean that many students are admitted who have not developed some of these skills before.

So, how should theological librarians think about and respond to AI? As the work of McLuhan, Herzfeld, Sacasas, and the Vatican's AI Research Group demonstrate, there are many useful frameworks for

thinking through the use and impact of AI. My hope is that as I learn more about different AI tools, I can apply these frameworks to think through using AI in light of my theological commitments and my institution's values. Doing so alongside faculty and students can help bring a range of perspectives and develop a cohesive understanding of AI and its effects in the context of a community.

Given how quickly AI is developing and how many different products there are, policies about AI are unlikely to address the full range of AI uses and tools. This does not mean that policies about AI should not be written, but they should be viewed as a general framework, not something that can account for every possible use of AI. Rather than focusing on creating a comprehensive policy, theological librarians can address AI by helping students develop research and writing habits that strengthen their skills, even while using some AI tools. There can be cases in which using generative AI is useful, but we should work to ensure that students are using AI intentionally, rather than feeling that they need to outsource their work to generative AI due to a lack of skill, resources, or support. Helping students form these habits and skills will assist them in their studies and as leaders in their communities, which will also have to grapple with the impact of AI.

QUESTION 3. WHAT ROLE(S) MIGHT THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANS HAVE IN THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD?

Brady Beard

In the brave new world of artificial intelligence, librarians may be tempted to take on many new roles, but they should focus their energy on playing the role they are trained for: *librarian*. In many of our institutions there is pressure to perform tasks in addition to our responsibilities as knowledge laborers; we often extol the work that librarians do as technology wizzes, pastoral counselors, assignment interpreter, and campus representative. To be sure, many of these roles are in fact important to librarianship, but without critical reflection, they can easily replace what many of us have trained to do: to collect, organize, preserve, navigate, synthesize, understand, and distribute information in many different forms. When it comes to AI and theological education, the temptation to go beyond our professional responsibilities is especially strong. This is due in part

to our positionality with respect to information. We can easily see from the cataloging office or reference desk that no one else seems to be working on a topic or issue, or at least they aren't working on it as quickly as we would like, so we feel that we must mitigate the negative and highlight the positive effects. As librarians, we can respond to artificial intelligence by building on our professional strengths through the four roles of *guide*, *connector*, *supporter*, and *revealer*.

Before we get to that, however, I'd like to discuss one role that I don't think most of us are equipped to play. Librarians may feel pressure to engage AI as *technical experts*. This pressure may be formal or informal at any given institution. Often the library is on the front lines of institutional and educational technology. Additionally, AI tools are being integrated into search products and therefore disrupting information systems and information-seeking behavior. Naturally then, librarians may be expected to guide their institutions through the confounding literature and opinion pieces about AI, machine learning, and everything else. In addition to being on the tech frontline, librarians are often deeply involved in student academic support. Because many in higher education have hyper-fixated on GenAI as it relates to intellectual honesty and academic integrity, it makes sense that libraries would be asked to provide guidance on how/when/if students should be permitted to utilize GenAI.

The focus on technology and academic integrity can pressure librarians to function as their institution's AI technician. Unless they have some serious skills in computer science, it's likely not worth engaging on GenAI in a technical aspect beyond what they are already equipped to do. As information workers, librarians regularly deal with data management, computer-human interface, and complex front-end systems. Most librarians don't have the technical back-end skills to dissect Copilot, ChatGPT, or Gemini. Because of the speed at which technology changes, understanding the technical aspects is likely not a good use of time. Instead, librarians should approach the topic from a place of our professional strengths to help usher our users into the brave new world.

GUIDE

Librarians often guide others in new systems, tools, and subject areas. In this regard, librarians can act from a point of strength when it comes to AI. AI research seems to change day to day and the speed at which new technologies develop only seems to be increasing. As overwhelming as such advances are to librarians, it must be even more so for faculty and students in theological institutions. Many librarians simply aren't equipped to stay up to date on developments in AI research, but they do know how to find the most recent and relevant research. Guiding researchers and providing high-level evaluation, providing user support, and engaging critically will be time well spent. To borrow an example from the reference desk, I am often asked to help users navigate a tool like The Perseus Digital Library. My Greek is not as strong as it once was, and my Latin is virtually non-existent. As an expert in those specific areas of evaluation and research, I'm probably not the best resource for students or faculty, but as a guide who can help them navigate the big picture, I can provide a service that they likely will not be able to get from colleagues. I think the same is true for conversations around GenAI: I do not need to know exactly how a neural network functions, but I can understand enough of it to be able to navigate a tool and begin to evaluate the outputs based on what I might know of the general behavior of the product.

CONNECTOR

I tell students regularly that my favorite part of being a librarian is getting to do research with them and not have to provide a graded evaluation to them at the end of our time together. And that's true. When it comes to the role that librarians can play in AI discussions, I think we can also be a point for connection and collaboration that doesn't necessarily adhere to the strictures of a more formal academic space. To illustrate this point, last year at my institution I convened a small conversation group, "Speaking of the Divine in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An ALC on Theology and AI," with a \$2,000 internal grant that I was awarded from the AIAI Network. The purpose of the grant was to gather scholars, librarians, students, and staff from Atlanta area theological schools to hold theologically informed discussions about AI (AIAI Network, n.d.). In total, ten or

so folks gathered from two institutions. Nearly all the participants were staff who joined for a lunch-time conversation on Zoom, once every three weeks or so. The bulk of the funds went to sponsoring a public lecture on campus. The rest of the funds went to purchasing books for the participants.

When we started, I was surprised that there was as much interest from staff at my school as there was, and then I started listening to their interests. One participant was an assistant in the dean's office who had a certificate in business analytics and uses AI to help with her daily workflow. Another was our director of career services who wanted to integrate AI into her services to students, and to better understand the space that students would be going into. Each participant brought a wealth of experience, knowledge, and questions that were new to me and were raised outside of library-land. It was a really refreshing way to connect with folks and find common cause in our day-to-day. The type of space that we were able to create was unique and fostered genuine engagement with the possibilities of AI while still addressing the harms that may result from AI.

SUPPORTER

You don't have to look far in higher education to find blogs, articles, op-eds, etc., about the crisis that AI is causing in academic integrity. A recent study of highschoolers, however, found that the use of AI has had little, if any, impact on how students cheat. In fact, some of the findings simply confirmed the fact that using AI to cheat well (i.e., to cheat without the possibility of getting caught) is difficult and there are lots of other easier ways to cheat (Lee et al. 2023). Instead, students were interested in finding ways to incorporate gen AI into their workflows. This brings us to the third role, that of supporter.

Because we often provide non-evaluative instruction, as librarians we play a special role in the education process of a student's life. The focus on plagiarism and academic integrity gets in the way of that. GenAI is an opportunity for us to provide information literacy instruction, apply professional and personal ethics, and to think creatively with our students about how the subjects of their study engage the real world.

REVEALER

Finally, we can be revealers. Part of our work as librarians is to organize and structure the information around us, but part of our task is to also be open about the very human (and sometimes not-so-arbitrary) reasons that our information landscape looks the way it does. Just as we might teach students how to navigate subject headings and to recognize the implicit biases and ethical dilemmas in our collections, we can also help reveal to students the structures that make up the world of AI. As people who think hard about data and its use, we can reveal the ethical and dubious ways that data of all kinds is gathered, structured, and deployed. With our professional expertise in information systems, we can rely on our strengths at critiquing black-box algorithms, systems that seem natural but aren't, and show how the data impacts our communities. We can do all of this without having to become technicians who build programs or train models.

AI feels overwhelming, and the need to keep up seems unfair and biased toward the over-resourced, but if we apply our strengths to the question, we can offer our institutions something they might not otherwise get.

QUESTION 4. SHOULD INSTITUTIONS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION CONSIDER PURSUING A KIND OF NEW MONASTICISM, LEAVING THE DECADENT DYSTOPIA INTO WHICH WE SEEM TO BE HEADING FOR THE PURITY OF QUILL AND PARCHMENT? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Emily Peterson

While AI is not something I have naturally gravitated towards as a user, I have found it to be a fascinating topic of research and conversation because of the ways it draws out other important conversations about mission, values, and practice. That is why I found this question about a new monasticism especially interesting—it begs other essential questions that underpin the lives of our institutions. The appeal of the “new monasticism” response in the face of the risks of AI is also powerful, and it demands a direct treatment.

Each institution must determine its own mission-driven response to AI, yet I would argue that the most productive answer to this

question holds across the field: “no, but. . .” The “no” is not a wholesale embrace of AI, but rather a rejection of a fear-driven wholesale rejection that can have unconsidered consequences. Nuance and context are essential to expanding on that “no,” with particular attention to pedagogy, content, and practical applications.

At the heart of the matter of pedagogy is the question, How do we teach? And how does that affect how we do or do not integrate artificial intelligence into theological education? As much as libraries have often been at the forefront of adopting new technology, academic libraries in particular are often also a focus of academic fantasies that cast them as sacred and hushed intellectual sanctuaries, a vision that is underpinned in many ways by libraries’ historical relationship to monastic communities. The idea of the “purity of the quill and parchment” posed by the above question reflects this vision and comes with assumptions of certain pedagogical practices, particularly handwritten in-class exams and papers. I have heard multiple students and instructors suggest that blue books (a more “modern” iteration of “quill and parchment”) may be the best way to respond to the pedagogical threats of AI.

Yet I think it’s important to ask why we largely do not rely on blue books anymore. Are these “quill and parchment” methods actually “pure,” as our question implies? Were they ever clean, unadulterated assessments of learning? After all, people have been capable of plagiarism and cheating and shortcutting long before we even had typewriters, let alone computers. To set forth any single method as “pure” is fantasy, not reality.

Our understanding of effective and inclusive teaching methods has evolved over time, not only in response to the availability of new technologies, but also as those new technologies have helped to solve identified problems in the methods we were using—not to mention as we learned more about the diversities in how we learn. We have adopted new methods of teaching and assessment (both product- and process-based) because we have confronted convincing reasons for change. Those reasons have not disappeared just because AI has arisen as a new challenge. Simply reverting to older methods of teaching and assessment, then, is not a responsible way of coping with the advent of AI.

It is important to ask ourselves *why* we romanticize that fantastical academy of the past when confronted with a difficult new challenge—and whether we *should*. History has much to teach us, but it cannot be our unchanging model for how things should be done now and in the future. Nostalgia for a pre-AI era cannot solve the challenges of the AI age. To practice fearful avoidance that idealizes the past poses the risk of moving us backwards into old problems in the interest of avoiding new ones, cheating our students out of an education that builds on everything we have learned about effective, inclusive, transformative, and accessible teaching.

Therefore, I propose that we adopt this question for thinking about pedagogy in response to AI: How can we use the toolkit of methods we have already developed as a field (including some of those “quill and parchment” methods), combined with new advances and thinking, to creatively address the pedagogical challenge AI poses in theological education? One idea that has emerged in conversations with colleagues at my institution has been leaning more into scaffolded project-based assignments so that instructors can peek “behind the curtain” of students’ processes in a more structured way. Or, if we want to actively integrate AI into pedagogical methods, we can take cues from the creativity of our students; for example, some students at CTS are having generative AI argue against their thesis statements to help them improve their arguments. This is a constructive use of generative AI that can help reinforce learning goals.

In addition to impacting how we teach, technology also impacts what we teach, and that is an essential consideration in relationship to AI, too. Our theological institutions seek to teach content that is applicable to the contexts and realities in which our students might find themselves either during their studies or once they graduate. We want their education to be relevant to the work they do, to help equip and prepare them for it. To that end, then, it’s not just about content knowledge—theology or church history or Bible. Our institutions also seek to teach skills, frameworks, and methods for meeting future challenges in the field. While some theological degrees live mostly in the theoretical realm, most of us are focused on teaching practitioners. These students are not preparing to live and work in a monastic setting after graduation. They are preparing for life and work in the larger world.

It is worthwhile to pause this discussion momentarily to acknowledge that I see value in monastic retreat, including for real-world practitioners. Many of us know firsthand the value to be found in the rest, discipline, and reflection found in such settings. To build our degree programs around such retreats, however, for people who are preparing to do difficult and immersive work in the real world is ultimately a practice of avoidance. If we seek to avoid engaging with AI by adopting a withdraw-and-seclude approach, we are failing to prepare our students for the world in which they will live and work when they graduate. This is not to say that all “new monastic” practices should be discarded in light of AI; rather, that our institutions’ engagement with those practices should be because of their benefits rather than, again, the fearful avoidance of new technologies.

The essential feature here is *decision-making*. To so strictly control a learning environment for people who are to become leaders of communities saturated in the technology, media, and culture of the modern world is to deprive them of the opportunity to reflect on how to make faithful and ethical decisions. A strong consideration of ethics has always been important in theological education, and it needs to be an area of equal or greater emphasis moving forward, particularly in relationship to AI.

To offer another counter-question, then: How can we help our students to develop more dynamic and critically-reflective theological frameworks for understanding this inevitably changing world and making faithful decisions within it—in this case, choices related to AI? The frameworks Allison presented above are helpful to this end, particularly the questions from Sacasas. This is also a place where Brady’s reflections about the role of theological librarians becomes especially pertinent. Librarians are already in the business of helping students make critically reflective choices about what is reliable, ethical, and scholarly. We can do the same with AI. Whatever our students may individually choose to do with their use of technology, they ought to understand *why* and be able to reason through the ethics of it themselves. Our libraries can be an essential partner in this process.

Lastly, institutions of theological education must consider what is realistic functionally beyond the curriculum itself, for those of us

doing the day-to-day work of our institutions. AI (or at least generative AI) seems so new to us because it really only entered the popular conversation as something real, not hypothetical, with the public release of ChatGPT in November 2022; however, as Brady mentioned above, AI has existed long enough that it is firmly rooted in some of the technologies we already use, and its footprint is growing—not just in standalone products like ChatGPT or Claude or Perplexity, but also as integrated functionalities of other common technologies like Grammarly or various search interfaces. Companies tend to trumpet the addition of AI capabilities as a selling point, but in some cases, AI integration may happen more quietly without us even knowing it is there. If we choose to limit ourselves only to AI-free tools and technologies, we will find ourselves with slimmer and slimmer options over time.

In short, total avoidance of AI is more difficult than it seems and is ultimately unrealistic. Putting aside how issues of user agency and data privacy and usage make it nearly impossible to fully opt out of participating in AI anyway, attempting to do so would likely involve sacrificing many of the useful and untroubling tools we have come to depend on. Some of those AI enhancements can help make our tools more useful and efficient, our data more accurate.

A key final question related to realistic practical applications, especially when it comes to generative AI, is related to terms of enforcement and accountability. Many faculty and administrators want to be able to rely on tools like AI checkers to catch use of AI where it is not permitted, whether that is in applications for admission, in academic assignments, or elsewhere. But we know those tools are notoriously unreliable and will likely always be at least one step behind the exponential advancement of AI technologies. A wholesale ban on AI use is therefore exceedingly hard to enforce, at least with the tools and tech available to us right now.

Rather than attempting a complete opt-out, then, I invite us to consider—much like in our question about what we teach—how to ethically engage with AI. What decisions can we make institutionally to practice, model, and foster responsible use of AI? This is the kind of approach that helps to support critical thinking, effective leadership, and creative ministry.

So, then, should institutions of theological education consider pursuing a kind of new monasticism, leaving the decadent dystopia into which we seem to be heading for the purity of the quill and parchment? It may be an attractive route, but I argue no. We live in a complex world, and we are continuously learning from the realities that we've faced in the past and are facing today. Turning back to the past to solve our problems for us disregards the constructive learning that has allowed us to more faithfully and effectively fulfill our educational mission to prepare our students for the world in which they live.

Instead, I invite us to get creative with our pedagogy by combining our toolkit of established methods with new advances and thinking, to help our students develop more dynamic and critically-reflective theological frameworks for making faithful decisions related to AI, and to practice, model, and foster responsible use of AI institution-wide. It will take significant effort, collaboration, and imagination, especially given the pace at which AI is evolving. However, I believe these questions that AI is prompting us to ask can—if we receive them as an opportunity rather than as a threat—help us become more resilient and foster more resilience in our students as we all face the future together.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Francesco Dal Pozzo (Puteolanus, d. 1490) printed a “spectacularly inaccurate” edition of Ovid’s works in Bologna that unfortunately, because it was the first such edition (*editio princeps*) of the poet’s works, largely overshadowed a more accurate edition published in Rome a few months later (Lee 2022).

CONVERSATION GROUPS

Artful Response to Scriptures

Jude Morrissey, Access Services Librarian, Yale University Divinity School
Karl Stutzman, Director of Library Services, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ABSTRACT: Art has long been part of sacred texts in many religious faiths, notably as decorative, stylized, and illuminated calligraphy. How scripture was presented aesthetically carried sacred significance. In modern times, it is common to leave artistic expression of scripture to either paid professionals or children—but writing, illustrating, or artistically responding to scripture can be a devotional practice available to anyone. This paper discusses ways to recover creatively engaging with sacred texts as inspiration and medium, provides examples of creative spiritual engagement in practice, and discusses ways to engage students through related active and passive programming. Session attendees were given time and supplies for the practice of creative spiritual engagement and to share their experience of it. The session was accessible to a variety of religious traditions by allowing participants to choose their own sacred text with which to work.

INTRODUCTION

Sacred texts throughout time have often been made beautiful. Across faith traditions, it seems there was a recognized spiritual significance to presenting scriptures artistically. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in making creative expression part of engagement with faith for everyone. Such practices can benefit students at our institutions, particularly those participating in spiritually challenging activities, like nursing clinicals or pastoral internships.

Contemplative creative expression can be an excellent addition to library programming, both active and passive, meeting a real need for student communities and acting as a form of student outreach that grows on activities that are already common in library spaces.

Karl Stutzman, Director of Library Services, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

My inspiration for this session came from a Biblical Spirituality course I took several years ago at our seminary. One of the spiritual practices we learned was a form of artful response to Scripture. In my journey since then toward greater mental health, engagement with art and faith has been really important. I think that we as librarians have an important role in our institutions—we have a vocation to teach students to research, read, and write effectively, and part of this means engaging with texts in creative ways. I also have a strong interest in interfaith engagement. This has been an important aspect of Atla for me, and I'm interested in finding ways for us all to engage our diverse spiritualities together in this community. I hope that these practices of artful response to scripture provide a way that we can build a strong multifaith community.

Jude Morrissey, Access Services Librarian, Yale University Divinity School

In my own spiritual life, as a person with ADHD, I have found faithful creative expression to be powerful. Having something to do with my hands always helps me to concentrate; but making something related to the Scripture I am studying or the practice in which I am engaging deepens the experience and often leads me to new insights or a feeling of greater connection. I have used book art, photography, creative writing, and automatic drawing in my own devotional practices. I also create Anglican prayer beads while I pray, most of which I set out for students to take during midterms and finals or give to students beginning clinical pastoral education placements. As passive programming in the past, I have put together kits with instructions for making Anglican prayer beads and am currently planning a workshop for book art as spiritual practice.

SACRED TEXT AND ART

In many medieval Christian manuscripts, such as books of hours, the first letter of a prayer, Scripture, or other text was decorated with illustrations meant to suggest stories that would, with the help of their captions, be illuminated by the text itself. The historiated capital for Psalm 120 in the de Brailes Book of Hours (see figure 1) shows the Virgin Mary punching the devil in the nose—an illustration from the legend of Theophilus, whose soul is saved from damnation by Mary's intervention (Donovan 1991, 40). While reciting the Psalm, the reader is meant to consider the story presented in the artwork and draw spiritual insight or guidance from the experience.



Figure 1: Historiated capital of Psalm 120, Terce of the Virgin, from the de Brailes Book of Hours, ca. 1240 CE British Library Add MS 49999

In several faith traditions, the art of the text matters, as with the historiated capital. The lettering is not entirely decorative, but its beauty is important. For Christianity, as one of the “religions of the word,” like Judaism and Islam, writing itself is often considered to be invested with spiritual force and thus becomes Scripture. Just as the Word becomes visible in Christ Incarnate, the text of Scripture written down participates both in the spiritual realm and the physical. Decorative or illuminated text can be transformed and transformative, the visualized word not just communicating meaning but creating space for meditation and contemplation (Hamburger 2014, 6–8).

In Islam, too, writing is understood to be a way of manifesting the word of the Qur’an—and so calligraphy has risen to be the highest art, because it makes visible the message of the invisible God (Rahman 2004, 31). Often, Islamic calligraphy is highly decorative, in the formation of the letters themselves (see figure 2) or by making geometric, zoomorphic, or other shapes with writing (Schimmel 2004, 17).

For Judaism, studying the Torah is vital for spiritual development, but the call to study comes with a second call to write the words. In mystical Jewish traditions, it isn’t just the content of the text that carries meaning—the shapes of the letters have holy meanings (Pludwinski 2012, 4).

In many Eastern religions, writing is considered a gift from the gods (Stevens 1981, xi). In Hinduism, copying the alphabet becomes an act of worship, and each letter is an object of contemplation (Stevens 1981, 18). With all the spiritual meaning inherent in creative engagement in the written word, it may not be surprising that we tend to leave scriptural art to specially trained or professional artists, although we let children play with the words a bit, in Sunday school and the like.



Figure 2: Folio from a Qur'an manuscript, ca. 1180 CE, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 29.160.23

MODERN DEVOTIONAL MOVEMENTS

Recently, however, there have been movements in multiple faith traditions to encourage everyone to engage in art as spiritual practice. Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell, founder of BeauFolio Studio, leads workshops combining the Christian practice of *lectio divina* with guided sacred art-making: *creatio divina* (<https://beaufoliostudio.com/creatiodivina>). The process of *CreatioDivina* consists of five steps, labeled The Breath, The Invitation, The Creation, The Examination, and The Ask.

Rabbi Adina Allen brought together the Open Studio Process (an art therapy practice) with the Jewish practice of *beit midrash* to create the Jewish Studio Process, which is taught through the Jewish Studio Project as a practice to build spiritual connection and enact social transformation (<https://www.jewishstudioproject.org/the-jewish-studio-process>). The Jewish Studio Process follows the steps of Inquiry, Intention, Creative Exploration, and Reflection.

The Sacred Art Academy offers courses and workshops that teach Islam through art, including calligraphy (<https://www.sacredartacademy.com/>). Jayni Roxton-Wiggill, the owner and operator of Aura.Soul.Art who practices a form of Jungian spirituality, offers SoulFull Art workshops to lead participants to connect with their authentic selves for a fuller emotional and spiritual life (<https://www.aurasoulart.com/art-full>). This process includes Thematic Discussion/Guided Meditation, Breathing, a Labyrinth Walk, and Spontaneous Painting.

These are just a few examples of attempts to encourage spiritual formation through creative faith engagement. There are also communities of support formed around those who see their artwork as sacred practice (see figure 3), such as Numen Arts, a collective of polytheist artists who see their work as sacred practice (<https://numenarts.org/about.html>).



Figure 3: "Nehebkau," by Megan Zane, a Kemetic Orthodox priest and member of Numen Arts

In these and similar movements, the process differs; but there are some things they have in common. For traditions that have scriptures, reading and reflecting on the words of the text or, especially in Islam, the names of God, are often central to the process. In Buddhism, chanting mantras is, too. For traditions that do not have scriptures, thematic discussion or guided meditation may be used instead. Sometimes it is the emptying of thought, as in the Christian practice of centering prayer, that forms the bridge between the spiritual and the artistic to create a new practice. Usually, making art or other creative expression is followed by a time of shared reflection: communication with God, nature, or others is important to the practice. Shared reflections are not necessarily time-bound, either, but exist within the work itself. Ahmed Ramadan who moved from Egypt to the United States and joined Yale University Library as a

cataloging assistant in 2001 and who writes holy words as a spiritual practice (see figure 4) believes Arabic calligraphy is the pillar of Islamic art, communicating thoughts and meanings through its artistry across all ages.



Figure 4: Examples of Arabic calligraphy by Ahmed Ramadan

“CREATIO DIVINA” AND STUDENT OUTREACH

Libraries, particularly those connected to religious and theological institutions, are well-placed to bring the concept of spiritual engagement through creative expression, and some of the practices guiding such engagement, to their communities. Many academic libraries already participate in active or passive mental health and stress relief programming, particularly during midterms and finals. Several even put out art supplies already. Making art is good for mental and emotional health, especially during times of high stress; but making art is also good for spiritual health—particularly for “creative repair,” a term coined by Anne C. Holmes to refer to “regular, active engagement with the creative arts as a way of repairing energy expended in sensitive pastoral care” (Holmes 2023, 6). For seminary students involved in clinical pastoral education placements or internships, the practice they learn in the library could be the spiritual engagement that both serves an immediate need and provides long-term self-care in future ministry. For similar reasons, the same idea ought to hold true for religious folks studying nursing, social work, psychology, and any number of other fields where they are liable to face spiritual crises on a regular basis.

At schools where spiritual formation is a goal alongside academic formation, teaching students to engage their faith through art gives them an outlet to process their challenged and changing beliefs outside academic structures like formal papers—something that lets them feel as well as think about their living, evolving faith, something they can share without being evaluated or graded. ClieI Shdaimah, a recent graduate from Yale Divinity School and a devout Jew, notes that if she were to create today meditating on a pericope of Scripture, it would likely be very different from work she has done before on the same set of verses, because she is changing and growing and so is her understanding of the Scripture (see figure 5).

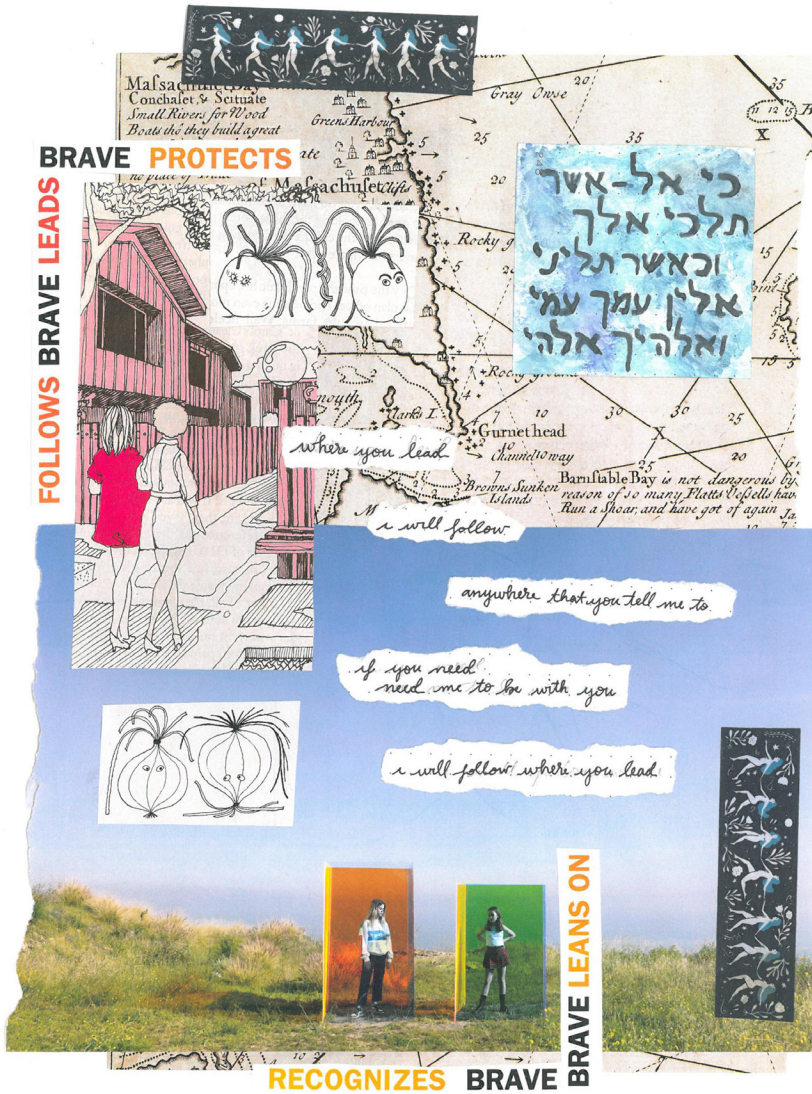


Figure 5: "Ruth," by Cliel Shdaimah

In addition, creative engagement with sacred texts can serve as an excellent gateway to interfaith discussion, particularly when different faith traditions share the same scriptures. It allows believers to show what the scripture means to them in their tradition and explore different meanings with those in different traditions. Library programming using other religious works, such as hymnals or prayer

books, as the raw material for creative spiritual practices can also be a good practice for creative weeding. Milligan Libraries, where Jude worked prior to joining Yale Divinity Library, held annual Book+Art events. For these events, students were encouraged to take books that had reached the end of their shelf-lives and transform them into artwork. Creating art from worn-out books or other items can also teach students one way to honor the medium when it no longer functions as intended. Loose pages from a beloved text can be used to create wall art, paperweights, bookmarks, and more (see figure 6). Creative practices can also be combined, such as using pages of a worn family Bible to make prayer beads, which can then serve as a reminder to pray for family members.



Figure 6: “Changed,” by Jude Morrissey, created for a Book+Art event using pages from a damaged reproduction of the Saint John’s Bible

There are several ways to reach out to students (either through active or passive programming) to encourage a practice of creative engagement with faith. Book art events, as at Milligan Libraries, can help students learn to honor the medium when it has begun to fall apart, and help them consider what can be done in their future ministries with old hymnals when it is time to replace them, instead of throwing them away or storing them indefinitely. Photography is another creative practice that can be adopted for spiritual growth—especially when a theme is introduced. Advent Word (<https://advent-word.org>) is an annual online event where followers are asked to creatively respond to the word of the day, taken from lectionary readings; it then posts images on social media, showcasing photographs from participants around the world. Something similar, where students are asked to respond to (for example) the all-school read with a photograph and tag the library, is a very passive program.

Students can be given the supplies and opportunity to use pictures and words in combination to represent something about their spiritual identity, which can then perhaps be displayed. Pictures of their creations might be put up digitally, rotating on a monitor (to save printing costs) and students encouraged to discuss their work together. A workshop on creative journaling or prayer, incorporating doodles or decorative lettering could be offered. Likewise, a hand-out explaining automatic drawing or painting, where you just start making art without intentionally working towards an image to see what appears and linking it to centering prayer or other meditative practices, can help folks who don't think of themselves as artistic begin to practice creative engagement with their faith. Sho Zuska, a Celtic neopagan, uses automatic drawing to create artwork while meditating outdoors, to connect spiritually with nature (see figure 7).

And, of course, libraries can show how calligraphy can be a creative practice of spiritual engagement with scripture. Making the words as beautiful as possible, decorating them with images from related stories or simply writing them in pleasant shapes while meditating on their meaning, can open space for spiritual contemplation. This could be a workshop, too, or it could be a display of Special Collections materials from various faiths along with a handout on the practice, encouraging students to try it for themselves.



Figure 7: “It’s All Gone Jazz, Again,” by Sho Zuska

PRACTICING AND SHARING

Practices and methods of engaging with artful response to scriptures may vary depending on the context. The supplies and setup may be fairly simple, to avoid messes and make them generally friendly to the library environment: paper of various weights and sizes, gel pens, and colored pencils go a long way and are fairly affordable, even for a modest library budget. For a more advanced setup in a facility that allows for cleanup, materials like scissors, glue, paints, clay, and more could be appropriate. The constraints of limited supplies may allow for a particular form of creativity to emerge; creativity thrives where there are boundaries and margins.

Providing examples—particularly of less than perfect models—may be helpful to participants in setting the stage. In the conference presentation, Karl emphasized that this activity was about “*process*, not perfection.”

It may be helpful to encourage participants to pair this with the use of other spiritual practices, such as prayer, or *lectio divina*, or silence—either before or after the artful response to their chosen text. Depending on the context, it can be helpful to define *scripture* generously. In the Atla conference context, for example, Karl acknowledged that participants would almost certainly not have a shared canon of scripture and that this was acceptable. In other contexts, it may be valuable to draw on a shared canon or make copies of sacred texts available. At Atla Annual, participants were relied upon to choose and bring with them their own copies of sacred texts.

Once participants choose their texts and spend time in reflection, it is up to the participants to write out their own texts in an artistic way, using color, lettering styles, doodling, and drawing to illustrate their text and bring it to life. This is a fairly freeform experience, allowing each individual to bring their creativity and expression to their text.

In the Atla conference context, participants used a sharing protocol to share texts, work, and experiences with each other. This could be useful for a group doing this activity together. It may also be possible to share asynchronously using a display space or social media. The sharing protocol used in the presentation arranged the group into a circle with a “talking piece” (any object that can signify respect for the person holding it having their turn to speak). As the leader, Karl acknowledged the diversity of those present and allowed participants to pass if they did not feel led to share. Passing the talking piece around the room and allowing each individual to claim their voice if they choose to do so can be a powerful exercise in listening and building community.

At Atla Annual, participants did two rounds of sharing. In the first round, the participants were able to identify their name and the text they chose. In the second round, participants could share a brief reflection on what they observed in the time of responding to the text using art. A rule against crosstalk, or commenting on the

shares of others, was instituted in order to ensure a safe space for everyone to share without fear of judgment.

CONCLUSION

Interactions with scripture are both deeply personal and communal. The range of expression permitted in this artful response activity allows individuals the opportunity to embody texts they consider sacred. It allows them to see how other individuals are engaging and learn from that as well. Done carefully, artful engagement with a variety of scriptures may be a way forward to building community in interfaith contexts. It may also be a source for strengthening a particular faith community from within. Libraries, as liminal spaces in the academy that mediate a long tradition of scholarship, are well-positioned to teach students and other community members the value of reading and responding to sacred texts through art. In this way, libraries can not only build individual spirituality, but also communal spirituality.

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Beyond Mere Denominationalism in Atla

Exploring Ways to Enhance Professional Development and Resource Sharing in Theological Librarianship

T. Patrick Milas, Director of the Gardner A. Sage Library and Assistant Professor of Theological Research & Bibliography, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

David Kriegh, Head of Collection Management, Saint Mary's College of California

Robin McCall, Seminary Librarian, Union Presbyterian Seminary

Alison Poage, Harrison Library Director, Seminary of the Southwest

Karl Stutzman, Director of Library Services, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ABSTRACT: It's not every professional association whose structure includes denominations. Why does Atla? What are these denominations, and how do they connect with Atla's member institutions and organizational aims? In this panel paper, T. Patrick Milas surveys the history of Atla's theological and faith-based aspects, with a focus on denominational groups and related conference worship/devotions. This is followed by a question-and-answer session with panelists representing the Anglican/Episcopal, Anabaptist/Mennonite, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian/Reformed denominational groups. Each representative discusses different aspects of their involvement and activities within denominational groups along with their perspectives on the activities, needs, and strengths of these groups, to discern and inspire their group's denominational identities and role within Atla.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS IN ATLA

T. Patrick Milas

When I first joined Atla in 2006 I noticed there were various events on the conference program that sounded like spiritual edification of

some kind, such as “Worship in the Anglican Tradition,” and some groups that had religious-sounding affiliations, such as the Anabaptist and Mennonite denominational group. Over the years I’ve attended many morning worship events sponsored by denominational groups other than my own. But I haven’t attended others’ meetings, nor have I scoured their minutes, which may or may not be a good reflection of what they actually do. Out of curiosity, I invited some of our colleagues who serve on various denominational groups to discuss what we are and what we do, and what we might be able to do if we knew more about each other.

But first, some background is in order. After searching the *Summary of Proceedings* from 1948 to 2017 for any references to the terms *denominations*, *denominational*, *denominational group*, *denominational meeting*, *denominational report*, *worship*, *devotions*, *meditation*, and *invocation*, I was able to identify some milestones, some trends, and a plethora of collaborative spirit.

In 1947, 51 librarians met in Louisville, Kentucky, to establish the American Theological Library Association (ATLA). Participants hailed from stand-alone seminaries, divinity schools at major universities, and a variety of Protestant denominations. In 1948 they assembled as the Second Annual Conference of ATLA, at which there was a “devotional period” but no denominational group meetings (ATLA 1948, 1). But as early as 1949, the ATLA *Summary of Proceedings* demonstrates that members were thinking and publishing about the “Values of Denominational Bibliography,” and continuing to offer spiritual devotion as part of the regular conference program (ATLA 1949, 21). Edward Starr, Librarian at Crozer Theological Seminary, wrote,

The fact that we have denominations, and are likely to have them for some time to come, can give us ground on which to stand. Denominational schools, and denominational foundations are stabilizing factors. . . . A carefully constructed denominational bibliography can tell us where we came from; how we lived, thought, and felt. It can indicate what we hope for, and perhaps even what we may achieve. . . . In all our pursuits may we seek, in the words of John Cotton Dana, “to hold the eel of wisdom by the tail.... May these bibliographical endeavors help to that purpose.” (Starr 1949, 21–27)

Our panel presentation hopes that by exploring these denominationally informed endeavors we may further help discern and inspire our bibliographical identities.

As in 1949, there was one instance of morning “devotions” in 1950 (ATLA 1950, 1). And between 1951 and 1953, there were two instances per conference. By 1955, “devotions” were referred to as “worship,” and offered every day of the conference (ATLA 1955, 1, 24, 69). In 1956 we have the first *Index to Proceedings*, but to that date, “denomination” does not appear in the *Index to Proceedings* (Chicago Area Theological Librarians 1956, 86–92). Nor have “denominational meetings” appeared on any agendas. In 1957, a single morning service was called simply “meditations” (ATLA 1957, 1). In 1958, worship was foregone (or undocumented) and a Lutheran bibliography was presented (Schmidt 1958, 8–24).

In 1959, there were “invocations” each day of the conference. The invocations were provided by representatives of Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal seminaries, respectively (ATLA 1959, v). So 1959 was a milestone for ATLA. The 1959 Annual Conference also featured a paper, “A Preliminary Survey of Some of the Existing Patterns of Intra-denominational Library Cooperation in the United States” by Roscoe Pierson, Librarian at the College of the Bible. (Pierson 1959, 139–146). (College of the Bible would later become known as Lexington Theological Seminary.) By 1960, ATLA seems to have set its standard for using a variety of terms for faith-related events such as “devotions” and “invocations.”

Also in 1960, a Committee on Denominational Resources was formed, formalizing two years of informal work by the Chair Niels Sonne of General Seminary. The Committee prepared and distributed a survey to all ATLA institutional members and church historical societies. It asked about denominational collecting policies and intra-denominational cooperation on denominational resources. The primary purpose was to inform a guide for all denominational resources. The secondary purpose was to provide material for Pierson’s paper on denominational collections for the theological libraries issue of *Library Trends* (Sonne et al. 1960, 16–17). These are major milestones in the history of not just ATLA, but collaboration in theological librarianship.

The Committee on Denominational Resources continued to appear in the conference program in 1961, but by 1962 it was not fruitful. In 1963, it was disbanded. The Chair Niels Sonne respectfully submitted that, “in view of the fact that this project has been in being since 1957, and that it has been impossible to produce any useful results, it is recommended that the Executive Committee dismiss the Committee on Denominational Resources” (Sonne 1963, 12).

Ironically, at the very same conference that year, ATLA’s denominational groups make their first appearance! Indeed, on the first day of the conference, after the first session, ATLA members split into denominational and area groups at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 18, 1963 (ATLA 1963, ix). I think we can earnestly point to that date and time as the first documented meetings of our ATLA denominational groups.

Denominational groups convened again in 1964 alongside interest groups (which seemed to replace “area groups” in programming). Specific denominations were not identified in the program (ATLA 1964, ix). The 1965 Annual Conference brought two new types of events to ATLA: a memorial and the reading of a telegram. The President read a telegram from the Catholic Library Association: “Greetings from the Catholic Library Association” (ATLA 1965, 3). It’s relevant to note that several Roman Catholic institutions were already attending the ATLA conferences at this time.

And yet in 1966, when ATLA’s denominational groups were documented for the first time with specific denominational names, and “conveners” appearing in the conference program, there were no Roman Catholic denominational groups. The denominational groups consisted of the following:

- Baptist (Calvin C. Turpin, Convener)
- Disciples (David McWhirter, Convener)
- Episcopalian (Thomas Edward Camp, Convener)
- Lutheran (John Heussman, Convener)
- Methodist (Elizabeth Royer, Convener)
- Presbyterian and Reformed (Ernest White, Convener)
- and “Other groups by arrangement” (ATLA 1966, xi)

It must have served some use to have these meetings, because they were given some precedence; after a Presidential welcome, assembling into denominational groups was the first order of business at the Twentieth Annual Conference, to be followed by presentations of papers, budget meetings etc.

From 1967 to 1969, the “Original Six” (or “OS” as I refer to them) appeared consistently in the conference agenda, alternating who was the convener (and how the word *convenor* was spelled). In *Essays in Celebration of the First Fifty Years*, there is a note that Roman Catholic institutions were not participating until the late 1960s: “Since Roman Catholic participation in ATLA began in the late 1960s, the first twenty-five years of the Association history is predominantly Protestant” (Hurd 1996, 22). My review of the *Summary of Proceedings 1966–1969* confirms that during those initial years, the denominational groups’ infrastructure did not include Roman Catholic institutions.

But in 1970, ATLA finally welcomed the Catholic denominational group to the Association, with Fr. John Shellem as the first Convenor. That year, in President Harold B. Prince’s Address, we read:

Today as we begin our twenty-fourth year of living we are facing the question of whether ATLA can move forward more rapidly and more efficiently by altering its structure. . . I hope we will make changes in our operation. . . [including] broader participation in the conferences and in the life of the association. . . But as we get at these things, I hope we will not lose, or even diminish, the friendliness and camaraderie that is so much a part of our association’s life. I have heard our conferences denigrated as “mere fellowship.” If it is true that in this day of tension, of strained relationships, of talking at rather than talking with, we have a *koinonia* here—and I believe it is true—then it is indeed a pearl richer than all our tribe. I hope we will not let ourselves cast it away. (Prince 1970, 86).

In 1970, they wondered about their identity as a professional association and about “mere fellowship” as a problem. In 2024, let us interrogate whether or how we might best transcend our inherited structure of denominational groups and go beyond mere denominationalism.

But first, we have a few more decades of history. In 1972, the United Church of Christ group appears for the first time (ATLA 1972, 4). In 1973, denominational groups themselves got short shrift in the *Summary of Proceedings*, but there was a Love Feast, and the new *Index to the Summary of Proceedings 1947–1972* took great care

to delineate denominational resources (Jeschke 1973, 171–189). In 1974 and 1975, denominational group names appear in the agenda, without conveners' names or reports, and worship was absent from the program both years.

But in 1976, one of my own mentors, Norman Kansfield (one of the few ATLA members who had a PhD in Information Science), led worship every morning of the conference, and the denominational groups were back on the agenda (ATLA 1976, 1–3). In 1977 there were denominational meetings but no worship. In 1978 there was chapel every morning, and ambiguous “denominational meetings,” undifferentiated by denomination or convener (ATLA 1976, 2).

By 1980, contact information for the denominational group conveners appears for the first time. What were they thinking? Perhaps that ATLA members could wish to be in touch with conveners of relevant groups, perhaps even outside of their own denomination. Who knows if maybe even the public would be interested? Alas, only the Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterian-Reformed, and Roman Catholic groups provided contact information. The year 1980 was also a substantial milestone for documenting the goings-on at the various denominational cabals: their reports appear for the first time in the *Summary of Proceedings* (ATLA 1980, 109–115).

The history of the denominational groups is at times three steps forward and two steps back, since in 1981 denominational meetings are present in the agenda, but no convener information is provided, and there are no reports. (How can you request a report from someone you don't know how to contact? I don't know.) In other big news that year, the first student members participated. Maybe the powers that be didn't want to scare off the new library school students with all the denominational bravado! But what the *Summary of Proceedings* showed through 1982 was vague references to denominational meetings and no reports.

Come 1983, denominational groups appear by name in the *Summary of Proceedings* table of contents (ATLA 1983, iv) and contact information is included in the *Summary of Proceedings* reports section (93–95). Campbell-Stone appears first in 1983. And there are references to tangential groups, such as the Methodist Librarians Fellowship and the Presbyterian/Reformed Library Association. From 1984 to 1989, the denominational groups appear consistently in the

Summary of Proceedings and in the conference program; and they sponsored a variety of worship at annual conferences. What's more, the level of participation and extent of the reports from denominational groups usually exceeded those of other committees, including problem groups, task forces, area groups and interest groups. The denominational groups were an active and productive phenomenon, but were they useful? Well, they continued into the 1990s.

The 1991 program included a great variety of spiritual opportunities, with Matins and Compline bookending the first day of the conference, a memorial service the second day, and liturgy of word and eucharist with string quartet the third day (ATLA 1991, 18–23). In 1993 the Orthodox Librarians denominational group first appears (ATLA 1993, 102). The ATLA choir was active throughout the 1990s, with denominational groups content continuing to outpace the content from interest groups, even Technical Services and Automation up to 1993.

In 1994, interest groups' contributions to the work of the Association ballooned, far exceeding the reports of the denominational groups in the *Summary of Proceedings* (ATLA 1994, 93–116). The 1995 conference offered the first worship in the African Methodist Episcopal Tradition, with Renita Weems of Vanderbilt preaching (ATLA 1995, 3).

In the late 1990s, the names of the groups varied. Sometimes there was an Anglican group, sometimes Anglican and Episcopal. In 1997, there is the first meeting of the Anabaptist/Mennonite group (ATLA 1997, 5), held at a different time than the other groups (as Karl Stutzman elaborates upon in the question-and-answer portion below). The conference in 1999 offered the most worship, with four full services (ATLA 1999, 329–340). And with the addition of a “Non-Denominational denominational group,” the denominational groups once again outnumber the interest groups of ATLA in number (ATLA 1999, 4) and reporting productivity (ATLA 1999, 117–123, 319–328).

In 2000, the denominational groups are given an hour and fifteen minutes to meet, and meetings started at 7 p.m. New member breakfasts were scheduled right before morning worship (ATLA 2000, 2–3). In 2001, the denominational groups are given an hour and half to meet and meetings started at 3:30 p.m. (ATLA 2001, 3–4). In 2002 and 2003, denominational groups reporting overtakes

interest group reporting in terms of quantity of content (ATLA 2002, 65–71, 269–276; ATLA 2003, 4–45, 229–235); Quaker worship appears (237–239); and “Prayer at ATLA Banquet” (by John Trotti) officially appears in the program (Atla 2003, 249)! In 2004, the denominational meetings were scheduled at the same time as the International Collaboration Committee Meeting (ATLA 2004, 4). Why did the International Collaboration Committee meeting have to compete with denominational meetings? What if someone wished to participate in both, or multiple?

By 2005, there was more going on in the interest groups than the denominational groups, and sadly, the number of memorials outnumbered both types of groups’ coverage in the 59th Annual Conference’s *Summary of Proceedings*. It was a year of generational change in ATLA, as many Lifetime Members had passed on (ATLA 2005, vi). The 2007 Annual Conference doesn’t stand out particularly in terms of faith-related events or denominational groups trajectories, but it happened to be the first conference for me personally. I will confess I did not attend any of the worship services, but I did attend the Presbyterian denominational group.

The year 2008 was the low point for denominational groups submitting reports to the *Summary of Proceedings*, with only the Baptists, Lutherans, and UCC folks doing so (ATLA 2008, 367–368). In 2009, the Pentecostal Worship service conflicted with the Diversity Committee Breakfast (ATLA 2009, 3).

The year 2012 stands out as a year when Anglicans, Episcopalians, Orthodox, and Methodists either did not attend the conference, or did not meet as denominational groups, or met but did not report on their meetings. With such a liturgical desert, something interesting happened called a “Spiritual Discipline of Meditation” and a “Spiritual Discipline of Service” (ATLA 2012, 302–309).

The year 2013 appears to be the last time the Atla Hymn was sung (ATLA 2013, 7). It was also the only year when there was a joint Presbyterian and Evangelical worship service (ATLA 2013, 4). In 2015, the worship services were concurrent! You could either go Buddhist, Catholic, or Disciples of Christ, but nothing in between (ATLA 2015, 5).

The 2016 Annual Conference marked the first worship in the Jewish tradition (ATLA 2016, 1). And in 2017, with just two interest groups reporting (World Religions and Technical Services) and five denominational groups reporting (Baptist, Campbell-Stone, Lutheran, Methodist, and Catholic), the interest groups' reports and denominational groups' reports were extracted from the *Summary of Proceedings*, and moved to an online-only publication called the *Atla Annual Yearbook*. From 2018 to the present, the events and minutes of the groups have grown in number, complexity, and content, yet continue to appear only in the *Atla Annual Yearbook*.

For many years—and now in 2024—worship has been scheduled only first thing in the morning, before member breakfasts (at 7 a.m.), without hybrid setup or support. Even in 2022, denominational groups met in person when they could, but those are now only online. So the denominational groups have a long, storied history, but some of the age-old questions about our groups functioning for “mere fellowship” or as mere siloes abide to this day. But I have every faith that our distinguished panelists will help us to better understand our story, current context, and future possibilities.

PANEL DISCUSSION

- The program then moved to the panel portion:
- T. Patrick Milas—moderator
- Alison Poage—Anglican & Episcopal
- Karl Stutzman—Anabaptist & Mennonite
- David Kriegh—Roman Catholic
- Robin McCall—Presbyterian & Reformed

QUESTION 1. DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE DENOMINATIONAL GROUP TO WHICH YOU BELONG PERSONALLY? OR DO YOU REPRESENT YOUR INSTITUTION AT ITS DENOMINATIONAL GROUP MEETINGS? OR BOTH?

Alison Poage

Hi, everyone. Thank you, Patrick, for a great introduction to that history of the denominational group. Yes, I do belong to the denominational group to which I belong personally, because I think my calling to come to an Episcopal seminary was also a calling to become an Episcopalian. I didn't realize that at the time, but I was Roman Catholic

and was received by the Episcopal Church shortly after starting at Seminary of the Southwest. However, that didn't mean that I knew everything that I needed to know to work in the Anglican/Episcopal setting! Attending the denominational meetings was very helpful to me at the time, and as you'll learn, it continues to be.

Robin McCall

Hi, I really enjoyed that introduction—I learned a lot from that. Thank you, Patrick. I am different: I work for an institution affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA, but my own background is Baptist. I inherited the chair position of the Presbyterian/Reformed group from my predecessor, Christopher Richardson, who was the seminary librarian before me here, but he wasn't Presbyterian either—he was Quaker. So we have a long history, I guess—at least two people—of not being Presbyterian/Reformed, but heading up this denominational group.

Karl Stutzman

Thanks, Patrick, for the intro. Our denominational group (Anabaptist-Mennonite) already met on Zoom, and in the meeting, Eileen Saner, who is my predecessor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, remembered starting the Anabaptist-Mennonite group in 1997. So having this history handy to share with her was really cool. I do participate in the denominational group that I belong to personally, and personally work for, etc. That's not totally common for our group, as I'll get into later, but that's where I'm at.

David Kriegh

First off, thank you, Patrick, for the introduction. It's really humbling to hear the history of denominationalism all the way up to now, and I sort of think of the Catholic group as in the second half of the book on the story, and then my parts like somewhere in the index way at the end, so it's like I'm standing on the shoulders of giants. I'm kind of a combination of my colleagues here: I am personally Episcopalian, and look at me now—I'm convening the Catholic group. I did not swim the Tiber, whereas Alison swam the Thames or the Potomac, whatever they want to call that. But that is the number one question I get, too: what do you choose to do as far as what

group you want to be a part of? And the easy answer for me is that I love my fellow Catholics in employment. I was in a situation in my seminary where I was one of only two non-Catholics working there. But it was still a welcoming space, and I found a welcoming space here as well, and I found this particular group is really where my energy was at. That's why I chose to gravitate to that group. No disrespect to the Anglicans!

QUESTION 2. DOES YOUR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP SUPPORT OR INSPIRE YOU PERSONALLY?

David Kriegh

It's kind of nice when the first question just leads into the second question, organically. The denominational group definitely inspires me a lot here. The number one reason to the question people ask, why do I keep coming to this conference: I've since left the seminary that I was working at, a lot of changes happened, and I'm technically adjacent to the realm of theological librarianship now. I also want to credit Carisse [Berryhill] for getting me to come in the first place. It's my tenth time here, I owe a lot to her for that. But I was considering the Catholic group the main attraction when I came here. I love when we get together in person. I'm still mourning the loss of going to an event for our business, plus going out to dinner, making the reservations, everything like that. I feel that what inspires me is within a small-enough group for me. I'm the kind of person that likes to work within a small group. Not to say we're a tiny group, either, but we're a subset of Atla, and that helps with the ideas percolating the conversation. I always look forward to seeing everyone. I'm always overjoyed when I see Stephen [Sweeney], or Connie [Song], and the others there. That really keeps me coming back. It really does inspire me personally. Yes, it does.

QUESTION 3. DOES YOUR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP STEWARD DENOMINATION-SPECIFIC RESOURCES OR PROGRAMS? IF SO, HOW?

Alison Poage

A subset within the Anglican denominational group has started a conversation about our holdings of diocesan journals in the Episcopal

Church. We got underway earlier this year. It was Dr. Romulus Stefanut from the School of Theology at Sewanee and Dr. Mitzi Budde from Virginia Theological Seminary, and her colleague Jim Fitch, and my colleague, Duane Carter. We started talking about which diocesan journals and newsletters we are currently holding, where do we have overlap, and where might we consider—we're still in the early stages of this, we're just talking—having an institutional commitment to retaining certain diocesan journals; and might we share any journals that we have here that maybe fills in a run of journals that another institution is missing. So that was work that is not necessarily new to everybody. I think it's something that's been done in the history of our denominational group. But we're rekindling this kind of conversation right now, and on a small level. We received a donation here of what we call "The Red Book" in the Episcopal Church (the *Episcopal Church Annual*), and I just sent a box of those over to Sewanee because they could use an extra copy of certain years. I'm excited to see this kind of cooperation in the Anglican denominational group getting going at this time.

Robin McCall

This question was a really great opportunity for me to do some networking with people who have chaired the Presbyterian/Reformed group in the past. So I spoke with Virginia Dearborn, who's here today and also with Jim Pakala, who was the chair for some time, and several other folks along the way. We don't officially steward anything specific in terms of denominational resources currently. But there have been times in the past when members of the denominational group have worked together to create finding aids for the very sort of thing that Alison's talking about—denomination-specific resources that maybe different libraries hold—so that we know where to find certain things, or who has an institutional repository for certain items. And that's something that would be really valuable to do again.

QUESTION 4. IN WHAT WAYS DOES YOUR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP COMMUNICATE?

Alison Poage

Well, we communicate really well because Patrick Milas organizes us. He's our chair right now and will help schedule our meeting that's

going to take place as part of this conference. We also have the listserv that Atla runs for us, which has been a useful tool. It was used recently to help plan the service that took place at the conference in Long Beach, and it's how we heard, for example, that Dr. Mitzi Budde is retiring this year after 33 years of working at Virginia Theological Seminary. So, just because I was helping to present this panel, I was noting how the listserv is a communication tool to communicate big news. I know I also feel inspired, as Robin was saying. As I've been reflecting on preparing for this panel, I can think of more ways that I would use the listserv in the future. You may see some more posts from me, those of you that are on that listserv.

QUESTION 5. WHAT CONCERNS ARE YOUR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP CURRENTLY FACING?

Robin McCall

In this one, I looked back through the group minutes in the *Yearbook*, and I found this—this was from last year, which was the year that I became the chair—and we wrote, “one challenge is that many people working at Presbyterian or Reformed schools are not themselves members of those denominational groups” (Dearborn 2023, 50). So that was something we already talked about—that several people in our group find themselves in that position. This has led to very low participation numbers in the denominational group, and a relative lack of interest in the group, as time has gone by. There are just fewer and fewer people working in Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries who are themselves Reformed/Presbyterian, which is interesting. I think I saw in the record that Patrick was putting together, that we haven't had a Presbyterian or Reformed Worship service at Atla since 2001, which is surprising. I feel it would be helpful to have some procedures in place for passing on group leadership. You know, succession planning for the denominational group, have a vice chair who will step into the leadership position after two years, or something like that so you don't have someone who's inheriting a chair position for a denominational group that they've never participated in before. If they are just new in the field, they won't have access to experience or knowledge about the group's purpose or history. So that is one of the questions: how do we get people involved in this group? Or do we encourage them to

go participate in the denominational group for the denomination of which they're a part, and figure out other ways to get people involved in the Presbyterian/Reformed group? Do we do both? I don't know. That's all the issues that we're currently facing.

Patrick Milas

Thanks so much, Robin. And I'd just like to add, there were some documents circulating among panelists to prepare for today—and I will own this—I might have indicated there hadn't been worship in explicitly the Reformed tradition, and I was thinking of the (Dutch) Reformed tradition, that my own seminary (New Brunswick Seminary) represents. I can affirm there have certainly been Presbyterian worship services offered much more recently than 2001.

QUESTION 6. CAN YOU SHARE ANY EXPERIENCES OF MENTORSHIP, COLLABORATION, OR LEADERSHIP YOU'VE HAD WITHIN YOUR DENOMINATION GROUP?

Alison Poage

Yes, I can. 2015 was the first Atla conference that I attended, in Denver, and at the time I was making a transition from working in the public library setting to an academic library setting and a theological setting. So, as you can imagine, it was a time when a lot of learning had to happen in a very short amount of time. I remember going to the Anglican denominational group and walking into the room and feeling a sense of welcome and relaxed camaraderie and collegiality going on. In preparation for this panel, I decided to see what the *Summary of Proceedings* in 2015 said, since Patrick did this great overview of it. I went to the *Summary of Proceedings* of that year for the Anglican denominational group, and it said that there were three seminaries represented: Sewanee and Virginia Theological Seminary and Seminary of the Southwest. And the members shared personal news with one another and “welcomed new member Alison Poage to the group” (Poage 2015, 338). So then I realized I actually wrote that, because—talk about standing on the shoulders of giants, as David said!—I could see that I was in the room with these folks that had a great deal of experience. I think I volunteered to take the minutes out of a desire to be helpful in

some way! I took the minutes, and that was that day in 2015. But that face-to-face meeting Jim Dunkly, and Mitzi Budde—the value of that could never really be expressed.

And I shared earlier that we're working on this shared resource project with diocesan journals. It is because of that meeting that day and because of connecting with those people. I couldn't go in-person to the conferences immediately after that. But those relationships had formed. And then, later on, when we transitioned to Zoom during COVID, I actually was able to rekindle those relationships—it felt to me we were seeing each other more often, it was easier for me to attend those online denominational meetings. So I'm very grateful for the denominational group. There are a lot of different arms of Atla. The interest groups are also great, and these smaller groups maybe can be a way to welcome people into the Atla work, and for me that was certainly what the Anglican denominational group did for me. So I'm grateful.

David Kriegh

Mentorship, collaboration, leadership. Well, right from the beginning to when I went to my first conference, they paired me off with someone to introduce me to the conference—that was Stephen Sweeney—so that was a really nice introduction. And I feel like the collaboration we talk about—what we're going to do at our meetings—and I remember one year [2017], we're all sitting in on different sessions and stuff, but no one in the room in our denominational meeting was up front. So I kind of made my exhortation: I said, "In 2018, in Indianapolis, let's present more." I think we had like five Catholic focus presentations from that. So that was really powerful, to have that happen. And really reflecting on how we were able to share out rather than compartmentalize Catholic formation in the context of Atla, that was a really powerful thing. We also talked in our meetings about ongoing things we've had. One of the other questions kind of touched on is the programs that we've kind of shepherded through to Atla: currently, CRRA is the big one right now (the Catholic Research Resources Alliance) being absorbed into Atla, but also earlier on, when I first started, it was CPLI [Catholic Periodical & Literature Index], going from being a separate product into being absorbed by Atla. And there was a lot of consternation over that. A lot of private meetings on the side, shall we say, outside

of the denominational meeting, were held to ensure worried people about what might happen from that.

We even had the experience of the CLA (Catholic Library Association) becoming very, very unsteady, and it seemed like their future was in doubt. There was some consideration of whether our group could absorb some of that, and ultimately, we said no. We needed CLA to be its own entity, and I've noticed since then they are reinventing themselves a lot. It's also important to know when we can't do something. But there's a lot of can-do attitude in our meetings. I'm grateful for all of that.

QUESTION 7. WHAT ROLE DOES OR MIGHT YOUR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP SERVE IN SUPPORT OF ATLA'S BROADER MISSION?

Robin McCall

Okay, I've brainstormed a few ideas here. For one thing, it is very important to preserve the opportunity to record memorials—things that are happening that are important in our area of librarianship, of religious study, scholarship just in general. For example, this week we lost Sam Valentine, who was the Professor Emeritus of Old Testament here at Union Presbyterian Seminary, and a wonderful Hebrew Bible scholar and a mentor to me, and a parent to me. And that's important for our school, it's important for our library, because he was a big supporter of our library. It's also important for people in Atla to know when we're losing scholars or when we're seeing changes in scholarship happening where we're losing a previous generation. Being able to share these beyond the denominational groups is really valuable, and encouraging people to read the *Yearbook*, and keeping the minutes in the *Yearbook* available to people. Creating finding aids and bibliographies of denominational records and their locations is a great idea, and perhaps sharing resources. Another thing that's going on at our library, for example, is that we are the institutional repository for PCUSA for the south of the country, and as such we have a lot of microfilm records of church minutes and histories and that sort of thing, and we found that a number of our records this year are experiencing vinegar syndrome, and we are going to lose some of those. Now, we've been really lucky that we have duplicates of those affected records, but we're the only library that has them, and yikes! That's a lot of really important information. It would be really

cool if there was a way that we could share those resources in some ways. Maybe microfilm is hard to share, but if there are ways that we could do that—which leads me to another idea that I had, which is possibly digitizing denominational records in some way, either at the library level, or making donations that contribute to allowing a larger library (such as UPSEM or the Presbyterian Historical Society) to do that kind of digitization because online hosting space is mad expensive. But being able to make those denominational resources accessible to others in an online format would be really great.

Karl Stutzman

As one of the younger denominational groups, one of the roles that we might play is kind of modeling the idea that groups can expand, inform, and grow anew. We don't necessarily have to have kind of a fixity of "these are the Christian subsets that meet together." There could be other religious affiliations, new kinds of birds of a feather. Just to kind of go back into the history a little bit to show what happened, it was over table fellowship that Eileen, my predecessor, discovered that there were a number of other birds of a feather of Anabaptist/Mennonites hanging around at Atla, working at other denominations' libraries, but they wanted to hang out together and get that fellowship of the group that they felt that affinity with. So that's why the Anabaptist-Mennonite group always met at a different time: it was for practical reasons. But there's also a kind of religious backdrop to that, which is that we have at least in some wings of the Anabaptist Mennonite movement, a real enacting of the whole meal as indicative of what the disciples did with Jesus. That table fellowship kind of theme continued, and when I joined the Anabaptist/Mennonite group in 2009, it was always a lunch at a different time from when all the other denominational groups met. There's flexibility and free form enough in Atla to allow for what we on the Board (I'm a member of the Board of Directors) articulated in our organizational ends, as expressing life stances. This is a broader term that indicates not just particularity of religious beliefs but all these stances that make up who we are. I think the Anabaptist life stance maybe provides a model that Atla can use for the future going forward.

Patrick Milas

Thanks so much, Karl. I like how you characterize your denominational group as essentially an affinity group as well, and you think about affinity, and other types of affinity groups.

QUESTION 8. HOW MIGHT ATLA BETTER SUPPORT EXISTING DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS?

David Kriegh

Thank you, Patrick. I have thoughts. One thing, as we saw from Patrick's history of denominational groups, is that consistency is always a good thing and yet we seem to be always changing and some of it's because some denominations that weren't represented came into existence in Atla and that structure had to correct that. I think that we had seen some things lately: the *Yearbook*, even though it kind of ripped out the denominational stuff out of the *Summary of Proceedings* (which has its own issues), also imposed standards we've never seen before on those—and I kind of like having guidelines to work from. When I get the minutes from Kathy [Harty], who's the minute taker for life and the minute dictator for life of the group, there's some consistency to that, and also we're creating a record as well. Atla made some good steps, and making that consistent, so that we can look through the history of these things and more clearly see that, and it'll be less archaeological than some of the experiences Patrick was discovering through years and years of the *Summary of Proceedings*. I would suggest that we look more at the conveners and the way conveners came about. My personal story is that it happened here in Long Beach eight years ago when Stephen Sweeney was elected to the Board of Directors. He said it was going to be hard for him to keep being the convener of the Catholic group (although I don't believe there's any bylaw saying you can't do both) so I volunteered to take over. It was super informal, there were no elections, disputes, or anything like that; it just kind of happened, and it's never changed since, and I'm still in this role. I might suggest that Atla look, though, at the arrangements and how the groups are selecting their conveners. Notice, too, when someone steps into being convener, that they're demonstrating some leadership and seeing succession planning in Atla; notice that action, what's happening there. There's a lot of energy coming out of denominational groups. As

we see in the history of Atla, sometimes trying to impose a top-down order on the denominations wasn't working out so much so they threw the whole thing out at one point. But now we're seeing more of a bottom-up approach, things coming out of the denominational groups. So really look at that, see how they're functioning, and see what best practices can be brought across the groups. Even though I'm not advocating that we all become the same, far from it, there are some consistent best practices that we can all learn from each other and follow, and that's really in the interest of the association.

QUESTION 9. HOW DOES THE TRADITION OF ATLA DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS ENGAGE WITH FAITHS BEYOND THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION, IF AT ALL?

Karl Stutzman

I alluded to this a little bit earlier. And really, the denominational groups introduced into Atla a spirit of interfaith understanding. Through planning these worship sessions through this engagement, across denominational groups, this kind of experience of worship—I've heard this from other folks in Atla as well—of learning and engagement and curiosity for each other, and our different expressions of faith, is a unique feature of Atla that is rooted in the history of these denominational groups that we learn today. As we continue to engage in interfaith understanding, this is a model that we already have developed for that engagement. I hope that we can continue to engage respectfully on the basis of our shared work as theological religious librarians. And I really think that the kinds of rituals that we develop at Atla, rooted in this past that we have of denominational groups, serves us well for our future in an increasingly more interfaith Americas, since that's where we're kind of based, but also around the world that we're engaging more and more locally. We're just going to have to keep getting more diverse. And that's a good thing. But we have this DNA, that is a great launch pad.

QUESTION 10. WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR GROUP?

Alison Poage

I'd like to share that it is a small group, and so far in my experience, it's been small participation. If anyone out there is curious about it or craving that kind of connection where you get to talk a little bit more in a smaller group, I would really recommend coming to the denominational meeting. The conversations that we've had today, listening about how some people are working in a denomination that's different from their own, makes me wonder if we could get more people coming and sharing different perspectives. The other thing I would like to share is just how meaningful it's been to hear about the generations. In the chat we were just hearing about someone who's done the work before. I learned from Mitzi about Newland Smith, an Episcopal seminary librarian. I had not known that name, but it was someone who was active in Atla and someone who was a mentor to Mitzi. I looked into who the person is, and now am familiar with another Episcopal librarian who's contributed to the field, even though we've never met. That's really neat; and in light of what Robin was saying about the importance of memorials, I think it's really nice to know of each other and know of each other's work, and to be able to carry on that legacy. And now that you shared, Patrick, that the first convener of the Episcopal denominational group was Thomas Edward Camp, of course, now I have a curiosity about Thomas Edward Camp. I value that about our group and the opportunity it can be for us to get to know each other and be mindful of each other's work.

Patrick Milas

I can add that, in the pandemic and the isolation of the pandemic, one of the things that the Anglican and Episcopal denominational group did was, instead of merely hosting worship at the Annual Conference, we also met midyear. During Advent we met online for prayer services as a way to continue to connect throughout the year, even though we weren't able to go to an in-person conference at all in 2020.

QUESTION 11. HOW DOES THE ABILITY TO GATHER AROUND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY ENHANCE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF ATLA?

Karl Stutzman

This is a really fantastic question for us to work on together. Actually, that dual identity that we hold as theological and librarians—we're *Atla*, lowercase now. But I think we still carry with us that identity as theological librarians largely: that's the name of our journal [*Theological Librarianship*]. I really believe that the two facets of that vocational identity are important to honor at the same time, they make sense together, in this context. I can go to a general church conference and that's not the same as this. I can go to a general library conference, and that's not the same as this. But there's something about this kind of shared passion that we have, as different as we all are from each other, that makes for a very special place of connection. And I experience coming to *Atla*, where we have our strongly held religious identities and vocations, along with our strongly held librarianship values, as a homecoming. John talked about it as a kind of family reunion, right? It's a tribe. That isn't just that we came from the same ancestor. We welcome new people into the tribe all the time. But it makes it a very special place where I do feel I found my people. That's the value of it for me.

Alison Poage

I would add to Karl's comment that I find it to be kind of a—I think he used the word *family*—I'll say stabilizing, comforting piece of our organization that's experienced a great deal of change. Those two things can be both in an organization: you could change and grow and become more diverse, and then you could have these traditional groups that share—our birds of a feather. And even as we're finding new birds of a feather, we have these traditional ones that we've heard about today and have been around since the 19...—I forget exactly what year it was—but it's been a little while. I find denominational groups to be beneficial to our organization in this time.

Patrick Milas

Thank you, Alison. I'd like to open it up to our audience now as well. Would any of you like to address the question of how does the ability

to gather around religious identity enhance your experience of the Atla conference or the experiences of people you know?

We had the comment from Carisse Berryhill, talking about the Campbell-Stone denominational group, and she shared that “Really it may be better to think of it as a tradition, such that our related libraries really collect from throughout the movement and support each other.” Thank you.

QUESTION 12. WHAT HAVE YOU MOST APPRECIATED ABOUT EVENTS OR WORSHIP PLANNED BY OTHER DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS?

Patrick Milas

We have a comment from Michelle Spomer, regarding the Presbyterian and Reformed denominational group and their recent digitization efforts and interest in greater collaboration.

Virginia Dearborn

Hello, everyone! It’s been a minute since I was Atla in-person, but a very early memory from my first Atla was just getting the opportunity to participate in the Atla Choir. I remember that when I heard that there was a choir I was like, “Wait a minute, talk about finding your people! We get to do librarianship and theology and choir?!” It also gave me an opportunity to participate in a worshipful way, which is very important to me, with singing, but in traditions and with music that are not from my own tradition, which is just really special.

Patrick Milas

Thank you. And we have a comment from Kate Wimer, about opportunities for participating in other denominational groups, “work events and worship have helped to bridge the gap between the many denominations that are represented in our seminaries and serve them better.”

Carisse Berryhill

Local host committees have been instrumental in planning our worship services, drawing upon local resources to sponsor worship, and the local host committees, as well as denominational groups, who contribute to that worship, and historically, sometimes in a big plenary setting and elsewhere, and the smaller settings.

Patrick Milas

We have a comment from an online attendee, thoughtfully remembering Melody McMahan and her work with the Roman Catholic denominational group's resources. Thank you.

Karl Stutzman

I have one memory of being involved in worship planning for Atla and that was in Indianapolis, right before the pandemic, and this was the beginning of worship happening in a little room off to the side. It was really meaningful, and we did that partly because of our faith identity, but partly because we were local-ish. (We're in Northern Indiana at my school, about three hours away from Indianapolis—but local-ish, just as some of the local hosts here are local-ish.) That was a really meaningful experience to come together, and we planned a hymn singing, which is something we do as Mennonites, and something that connected really well with our Atla colleagues, who also love to sing. That was a nice bridge point that we were able to build as both local and denominational in that involvement. There is something to be said, too, for a more intimate setting for worship. It's the faithful who really turn up at 7 a.m. in a small room off to the side at the conference, and you have a sense of that passion there.

Patrick Milas

Thank you, Karl—the faithful, perhaps the curious, perhaps the sleep-deprived.

Christina Torbert

There's really something unique about even having worship offerings at the Atla conference.

Patrick Milas

We have a comment from an online participant, in loving memory of Seth Kasten for his wonderful leadership of the Atla choir.

Michelle Spomer

The different worship services are really educational opportunities for folks from other associations, groups and traditions.

Patrick Milas

We're also interested to know about interfaith understanding, but we don't have time to address our final question, "does your denominational group currently build interfaith understanding? If so, how?"

Thank you for the kind remarks from our online participants; and thank you all for contributing to this panel and audience conversation. We'll look forward to continuing the conversation.

Thank you.

Special thanks go to Shraeyah Rajeshwaran, Library Assistant, Gardner A. Sage Library, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, for transcribing the panelists' question and answer portion of the program. Some responses have been shortened or edited for clarity.

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The Benefits and Challenges of Developing a Multilingual Library

Stephanie Garrett, Director of Library & Learning Services, Catholic International University

ABSTRACT: As online instruction allows universities to reach a global audience, there is a rising demand to offer courses and resources in multiple languages. This conversation session shared participants' collective concerns and hurdles, along with their best practices and successes when developing multilingual collections in their libraries.

The purpose of this conversation session is to share our collective concerns and hurdles, along with our best practices and successes when developing multilingual collections in our libraries. As online instruction allows universities to reach a global audience, there is a rising demand to offer courses and resources in multiple languages. While many publishers have international divisions, this does not necessarily mean that non-English resources are made available in the US. The American Library Association has published “Guidelines for Multilingual Materials Collection Development and Library Services to Hispanics,” but these guidelines have not been updated since 1990 and do not take into account digital library resources and ebooks in non-English languages (ALA 2007). Further, as universities offer classes taught in Spanish and other languages, this limited guidance increases the difficulty libraries face when striving to fulfill their mandate to provide “access to collections sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, format and currency to the research and teaching mission of the institution” (ALA 2006).

The goal for today is to help each other navigate the “expanding frontier” of digital access to published works from around the world. The session is designed to be interactive, and we will be using Padlet to allow both in-person and online attendees to provide input. We will begin with introductions and our institutional considerations. Then we will discuss benefits and challenges, best practices, preferred vendors and resources, and finally where we can find more help.

Last night, my university held the official ribbon cutting ceremony and changed its name from Catholic Distance University to Catholic International University. We are now operating under a mandate to “Teach All Nations.” We are a 100% online university that was founded in 1983. As a pontifical institute, we have grown from being the first online university with the authority to award Catechetical Diplomas to offering AA, BA, and MA degrees in Liberal Arts, Ecclesial Management, and Theology.

In Fall 2023, we enrolled our first cohort of Hispanic lay ministers in an AA in Theology program with a concentration in Catholic Social Teaching, to be taught in Spanish. In 2025, we will begin offering our MA in Theology program in Spanish. Also, in 2025, we will offer our MA in Ecclesial Management in both Italian and Spanish. While most of our faculty resides in the United States, we also have faculty working from Australia, Chile, Italy, Korea, Mexico, and Spain. Along with students in the United States, Catholic International University’s enrollment includes students from Canada, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Nigeria, and Switzerland.

To view the responses from attendees, or to add your library to the conversation, view the Introductions Padlet (<https://padlet.com/sgarrett64/introductions-arqs9ztwsf7rzpva>). Twelve attendees from eleven institutions responded. Ten of those institutions are developing multilingual collections in both print and digital; two institutions are working on digital-only collections. Language needs include Chinese, Dutch, Fijian, French, German, Korean, Samoan, Spanish and Tongan. Besides Latin America, libraries are working to service students in Africa, Asia, Europe, Fiji, India, and the Pacific Rim.

For Catholic International University, the benefit of developing a digital multilingual collection goes beyond simply adding non-English titles to the library’s holdings. Since we are a completely online university, being able to acquire unlimited user access to books in Spanish and other languages improves our ability to provide required and recommended reading materials for students no matter their country of residence. Not all students live in areas with the First World convenience of Amazon two-day delivery. Providing digital access to course materials ensures that students do not fall behind while waiting for the arrival of their books. As with all ebooks and digital resources, students benefit from improved accessibility,

accommodation of learning styles through features such as screen readers, search features, bookmarks, highlighting and annotation tools, and portability of materials between electronic devices.

We are also working to reduce reliance on non-English digital materials of questionable provenance. Beyond the need to better understand international copyright law, we face many of the same challenges theological institutions face with English titles in theology: not all titles are available digitally, titles are frequently out of print, digital copies available for institutional use can be difficult to find, and pirated material is increasingly pervasive on the internet.

To view the responses from attendees, or to add your library to the conversation, view the Benefits and Challenges Padlet (<https://padlet.com/sgarrett64/benefits-challenges-pk29jxfcn3lpvakz>).

At Catholic International University, we use both EBSCO and Proquest to purchase Spanish titles and frequently write publishers asking them to consider making titles available digitally, hoping that one day the squeaky wheel gets greased! Our existing subscription to the *Atla Religion Database with AtlaSerials* provides articles in a myriad of languages. Subscribing to *Digitalia Hispanica* has been a boon, not only for the wide variety of theology and religion titles at a reasonable price, but also for access to the multitude of other disciplines included with the subscription. We also make use of the AI technology in DeepL translation software ([DeepL.com](https://www.deepl.com)) to help students translate open-source material from English to Spanish.

To view the responses from attendees, or to add your library to the conversation, view the Best Practices and Preferred Resources/Vendor Padlet (<https://padlet.com/sgarrett64/best-practices-preferred-resources-vendors-6rkog93wspjvy0tt>).

Special thanks to Christina Torbert from the University of Mississippi, Ellen Frost from SMU's Perkins School of Theology, and Deborah Ortiz-Rivera from the Pitts Theological Library at Emory for stepping up to the mic and sharing their experiences.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Standing Committee on Copyright & Legal Matters (CLM): <https://www.ifla.org/units/clm/>

International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations (IFRRO): <https://ifrro.org/>

Copyright Advisory Network: <https://www.librarycopyright.net/>

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Copyright Treaty (WCT): <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/wct/>

U.S. Copyright Office, International Issues: <https://www.copyright.gov/international-issues/>

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It's Not Really My Job, but . . .

Librarians as Confessors, Job Counselors, IT Pros, Photocopier Healers, and Bike Mechanics

David Edward Schmersal, Access and Instruction Librarian, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: The overall purpose of this conversation group was to identify and document the myriad ways theological librarians support the missions and ministries of our institutions that are not often included in our official job descriptions.

INTRODUCTION

Librarians, particularly public services librarians, often find ourselves taking on tasks that fall outside even a generous interpretation of “other duties as assigned.” We do so because we want to help, because we are available, and because we interact with students on a regular basis. Acknowledging and naming the many ways we go “above and beyond” contributes to a greater sense of comradery, knowing that others are also engaged in this good, albeit extra-professional work. In addition to having a chance to share stories, build comradery, and perhaps offer and receive ideas and suggestions for best practices, our overall purpose in this conversation was to identify and document the myriad ways theological librarians support the missions and ministries of our institutions that are not often included in our official job descriptions.

THE CONVERSATION WAS STRUCTURED AROUND THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

IT support/troubleshooting

We noted how even something as simple as helping a student with a printer issue may ultimately contribute to student retention and

success, especially when students are feeling stressed and facing an imminent deadline for a paper or presentation. In addition to finding a solution, or work-around for the immediate problem, we also serve as a calming presence, or an equally frustrated comrade seeking to exorcize the gremlin from the printer.

Pastoral Care/career counseling/existential crisis/faith crisis

Students sometimes find themselves confronting challenging questions in seminary, from anxieties over career decisions (many of us are theological librarians because of such conversations), to crises of faith. Librarians, especially public services librarians, are both accessible, in that we are often in public spaces, and approachable, in that we mostly do not assign grades. We are also professionally obligated to be non-judgmental. Thus, perhaps one of the greatest services we provide is offering students a safe space to share their doubts and struggles and fears by being present and listening, even without providing answers. As some participants in our conversation noted, theological librarians often have taken courses in pastoral care and counseling and can draw on this knowledge to help us discern where we may be able to help students by offering a calm, attentive ear, and when to encourage students to seek professional help. We are quite good at saying “I do not know, but I can help you find resources that may provide answers.”

Faculty support (e.g., tenure documentation)

While students are commonly, and rightly, regarded as our primary focus, theological librarians also support faculty. In addition to offering workshops to help some students fill gaps in their prior education (thus freeing faculty to devote instruction time to more subject-specific content), librarians also support faculty in their own research. This not only includes traditional librarian tasks such as submitting interlibrary loan requests, but also non-librarian tasks such as proofreading, collecting documentation for tenure applications, (more) IT support, and delivering books to and from faculty offices.

Writing support (students, faculty, staff, administration)

At institutions where there is not a dedicated writing center or tutor, or when such assistance is only available at set times, librarians

sometimes find ourselves providing basic writing support. This can extend beyond students and may also include helping faculty determine how to cite an obscure unpublished source or editing official institutional publications. We can also draw on expertise and experience to offer advice on signage, internal and external communication, and policy documents.

Administration/institution

Because many of us work directly with students, whether in offering research assistance or supervising student workers, librarians often have first-hand, unmediated access to students. This enables us to hear and see students' challenges with specific assignments and frustrations with policies. We thus can offer instructors, institutional administrators, and deans valuable insight and perhaps suggest possible, salutary changes. Such first-hand observations can also help correct faulty assumptions (e.g., students do not use print books anymore).

"Other duties as assigned (and many not)" (e.g., cleaning, mopping, maintenance requests, pest removal, vehicle assistance, distributing Band-Aids, calling 911)

Librarians sometimes find ourselves facing situations that require immediate intervention, whether that means offering a Band-Aid for a cut, calling 911 for assistance with disruptive patrons, or mopping up a spilled beverage to keep others from slipping. We remove pests, change lightbulbs, help students with flat tires, and find leaks. We do what we can to help protect our patrons and our collections. While many of us are genuinely always happy to help, as one participant in our conversation pointed out, it is also important to make sure "other duties as assigned" does not become a black hole, swallowing our time in efforts that are not adequately recognized or compensated.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, having such conversations will help us realize, and communicate, how oft-overlooked "other duties" contribute to the missions and ministries of our institutions and enhance the well-being of our patrons, students, faculty, and staff.

Why Print? Making the Case for Building Print Library Collections

Karl Stutzman, Director of Library Services, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ABSTRACT: There are solid strategic reasons for libraries to continue collecting materials in print format, but these may not always be obvious to institutional administrators and others outside the library. Especially in the field of religious and theological information, print collections continue to be a significant resource for researchers. However, internal and external pressures at institutions with religion and theology programs have driven a desire to abandon print collections, often at odds with librarians. Librarians in the areas of religion and theology need to be able to make the case for widest possible access to important resources both in the present and in the future. I present a way to make this case on one sheet that is hopefully easy for non-librarians to understand. I also offer ideas of when and where to present this case.

CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), which is based in Elkhart, Indiana (USA), on the traditional homeland of the Miami and Potawatomi, is a small freestanding seminary with numerous distance programs and a very small campus program. Fortunately, our seminary has invested in an excellent library over the years with both print and online resources and dedicated staff. Our library is housed in a beautiful LEED-certified green construction building that opened in 2007—the first theological library in North America to be LEED-certified (“Library | Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary” n.d.). I have been at AMBS in various library roles since 2008. During that time, I’ve seen a great deal of change from mostly campus-based programs and print-based library resources to where we are now, with mostly online programs and resources.

Atla is a significant professional community for me, and I know many of my colleagues are going through similar transitions. I will

discuss how AMBS Library is handling some of these changes—hopefully in an adaptive way.

I don't think I can dial back the clock to 2008. Many theological and religious studies librarians are likely in the same place. In this time of rapid change, though, I think it is unwise to abandon all tradition. We shouldn't throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. I think that we need to make fresh cases for some more traditional aspects of librarianship as we attempt to serve our communities well.

THREATS TO PRINT COLLECTING

We've heard it all, haven't we?

We as librarians periodically hear downright negative perspectives on print library collections. They get pejoratively called “dead tree books.” People assume that everything is online now (or at least everything that matters). I get questions from constituents about what we are doing in the library—from fellow administrators, from donors, from board members, and so forth. The implication of these questions is sometimes that we might be backwards or wasting time and money on something that doesn't matter if we still care about print books. I've experienced this feeling like an assault on our profession, as if we are somehow now irrelevant in 2024

Many times, we know the reasons we still need to maintain print collections, but it can be hard to fend off all the questions and comments about it.

REASONS TO MAKE THE CASE

I want to be proactive in my communication about our print collections for several reasons.

The leading reason is that we need to maintain healthy relationships between our libraries and our communities as we adapt to change. Actually, these are relationships between us as *librarians* and our communities. We owe it to our communities to engage in honest and forthright communication. If we fail to communicate about how we're navigating technological change, our communities

will think that we are blithely unaware of reality. I would argue that librarians, not books, are the heart of the library enterprise. Hiding is not an option if we want to do our jobs with excellence.

Another reason to communicate our strategies for print library collections is to work in the spirit of assessment. How well are our strategies working to achieve our outcomes? We need to be open, of course, to the possibility that our print collections are not serving their intended purposes. By articulating our purpose and our strategies for getting there, we can see how well it is going. We can't say that something is not working without testing that assumption with data.

Finally, articulating our strategies is a way to secure investment in the library. If our constituents understand why we're approaching change with a mix of tradition and innovation, they will hopefully be more apt to invest in our libraries.

THE WHY

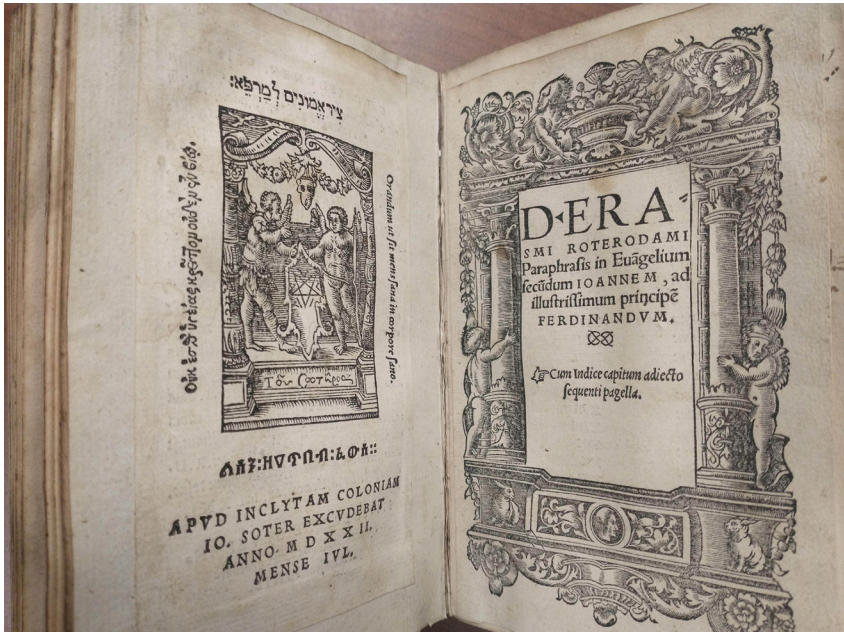


Image 1: Title page of Desiderius Erasmus' Latin paraphrase of the Gospel of John, a 1522 edition, printed in Cologne, Germany, by Johannes Soter. AMBS Library's volume has the paraphrases of Matthew and John bound together. AMBS Library Special Collections; Credit: Karl Stutzman

There is something of special beauty in “dead tree books.” Some time back, I saw a cartoon that I’ve been unable to locate again. It was an image of an “antiquarian e-book dealer.” His “store” was a bucket of flash drives.

I’ve sometimes said that print books will be less like typewriters after the invention of the personal computer and more like horses after the car. Print books are already becoming a higher-end accessory because they are beautiful and valuable in their own right; they are not simply valuable for their practical utility. So our articulation of the reasons for print collections probably needs to combine some of the remaining practical utility for print as well as this sense of print books as something higher end.

In my own institutional context, the reasons to continue to collect (at least partially) in print boiled down to four key constellations.

Increasing access to resources

Print collections enable us to purchase things that are not available electronically. This is still a significant chunk of resources in theology/religion areas.

The same titles are usually less expensive in print than are the electronic library versions. Collecting in print allows us to maximize our collection breadth and stretch our dollars further.

Owning versus licensing

Print collections are “owned” rather than “licensed.” This means that “first sale doctrine” applies, so we can sell them, digitize them within the bounds of copyright/fair use, and share them with other libraries in our network on interlibrary loan.

Licensed collections give publishers and ebook vendors ultimate control over access. Licensed books can be removed from the platforms at publishers’ discretion. This has significant implications for intellectual freedom.

Marketing AMBS distinctives

We have invested in excellent space for our physical library, which is a marketing tool for attracting new campus students.

Cutting our budget for print collection purchases sends mixed messages about our investment in this asset that provides a special service experience for persons on campus.

As other small seminaries increasingly gut their physical library collections, we have become distinctive in having excellent collections both in print and online. This is something to celebrate and advertise rather than following the pack.

Research shows

The California Digital Library completed research in 2015 comparing print and electronic text experiences (“Assessing E-Book and Print Book User Behavior in Academic Libraries,” n.d.).

Key findings included: access restrictions and usability challenges can make ebooks frustrating, reading online may cause physical discomfort, learning experiences are better with print books, ebooks provide annotation alternatives, multi-tasking is easier with ebooks, deep reading is more convenient with print books, recursive reading is better supported by print books.

There are other possible constellations I might mention if I were re-doing this today. One important one for our seminary is sustainability: for financial, ecological, and human reasons (to borrow the “people-planet-profits” model). Financially speaking, we get more “bang for our buck” with print books by making a long-term investment; and we can also share them with other libraries in a way that we’re not usually permitted to share our ebooks, meaning we don’t need to acquire as many titles. Ecologically speaking, while all types of library materials use natural resources, print books are generally produced from a renewable resource (trees), and the bits and bytes of ebooks are generally run on nonrenewable and carbon-emitting coal power. And in terms of the human element, print books might be more enjoyable for staff to work with—they can feel a sense of accomplishment in cataloging and shelving—and they are generally more usable for patrons as shown in the research.

Another constellation I could mention is the sense of community built around print books. Typically, online reading is a very solitary exercise, more so even than print reading. By using shared spaces to read and sharing book collections within a community, libraries build strong and resilient communities with common reading interests and bodies of knowledge. Often, we blame social media for the political and religious balkanization and polarization here in the United States, but perhaps the issue is broader in terms of the solitary nature of online reading and online information seeking.

COMMUNICATING THE WHY

Why print @ AMBS?

Karl Stutzman, 2023



Increasing access to resources

- Print collections enable us to purchase things that are not available electronically. This is still a significant chunk of resources in theology/religion areas.
- The same titles are usually *less expensive* in print than are the electronic library versions. Collecting in print allows us to maximize our collection breadth and stretch our dollars further.



Created by ProFontLab

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- Print collections are “owned” rather than “licensed.” This means that [“first sale doctrine”](#) applies, so we can sell them, digitize them within the bounds of [copyright/fair use](#), and share them with other libraries in our network on interlibrary loan.
- Licensed collections give publishers and ebook vendors ultimate control over access. Licensed books can be removed from the platform at publishers’ discretion. This has significant implications for

IMAGE 2: Portion of the Original “Why print @ AMBS” handout using icons from *The Noun Project*.

I worked at developing a single sheet that would convey these most important reasons.

This started out for me as a simple handout to attach to our budget proposal. I wanted to let my seminary’s Chief Financial Officer know why our print book budget line was important, and why I couldn’t simply take away those funds to pay for increasing database costs. So, this was part of an ask for a very modest budget increase.

Then, I brought the handout back as part of our annual assessment process. It was a handy reminder of our strategy with collections, and it was a starting point for some assessment of whether our strategy was working. We pulled data on the numbers of print books

and ebooks we had acquired along with the cost for each format. We discovered—surprise surprise!—that while we spent about half of the individually purchased book collection budget on print and the other half on ebooks, we were acquiring far more print content. Of course, that does not count the presence of subscription ebook collections that come cheap, but those are not always aligned with our collection needs and instead serve as supplemental or consortial collections. So, we were stretching our dollars further by purchasing print. Of course, there are other elements of this strategy that we could and should test, such as our own students' preferences for reading.



Image 3: Portion of the 2023 AMBS Library Annual Report, including an abbreviated version of the reasons for print along with colors and images

Finally, I had a brainwave to turn some of the data from our annual assessment report that I submitted to the dean into a graphical version that could reach a broader audience. This is what it looks like (see image 3), and you'll notice that our reasons for print feature prominently here. We added reasons for electronic collections as well and displayed some of the graphs showing our strategic acquisitions.

I am not a graphic designer, but I wanted to do my best to make something attractive. To make things presentable, I made sure to use institutional font and heading styles. Our marketing department has a style guide that is very handy. In my first handout, I used icons from the Noun Project as a way to make a simple yet accessible design (“Noun Project: Free Icons & Stock Photos for Everything,” n.d.).

On the graphical report, I need to give credit to Molly Reed of Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI), which is the consortium of smaller academic libraries in our state. Molly helped me by building an annual report template in Canva, which is easy-to-use online design software. Molly made sure to use AMBS fonts, colors, etc. Canva allows us to manipulate the same content into a variety of types of presentation. It also enables us to recycle elements for future years (“Canva,” n.d.).

RESULTS

I’m grateful for a foundation of excellent support for our library among our stakeholders.

This communication resulted in several things at AMBS. Our library got that small collections budget increase we requested. Our dean included our annual report in her report to the board. I received some comments from board members who understood our collection strategy. Finally, I have felt more confident in my “elevator speech” about why I still care about print books.

My results definitely exceeded my expectations. I hope that there will be positive results for other theology and religion librarians as well.

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LISTEN AND LEARN SESSIONS

AI in the Seminary Classroom

Equipping Faculty to Address the Pedagogical, Moral, and Ethical Aspects of AI Use for Class Assignments

Dyan Barbeau, Library Director, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

Kathy Harty, Research and Technology Librarian, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

ABSTRACT: Our session originated from our experience in responding to faculty questions about generative artificial intelligence and its use in class assignments. We addressed this issue with a faculty development session and the creation of a LibGuide in which we answered basic questions about AI mechanics, the need for an AI plagiarism policy, ideas for assignments less susceptible to AI use, and ideas for introducing AI to students. As we prepared resources for our faculty, we learned that AI use for class assignments presents challenges far beyond the typical concerns about plagiarism detection, including issues with pedagogical, moral, and ethical implications, and became increasingly convinced that AI education is not only advisable but necessary in the seminary classroom. We also learned that our faculty, like university faculty across the country, were hesitant to address this challenging topic. Librarians, who regularly adapt to changing technology, can take the lead and support faculty in navigating the many issues arising from AI use. We identify three areas of collaboration: developing AI policies, teaching about the moral and ethical concerns regarding AI use, and crafting assignments.

INTRODUCTION

Having received multiple questions from faculty regarding generative AI¹ plagiarism, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology librarians tackled the formidable task of AI education as librarians do, with research and a LibGuide. We hosted a faculty development session in January 2024 that focused on their plagiarism concerns, briefly discussing ethics, AI policies, and assignment design. Although our session and LibGuide sparked interest among our faculty, they did not follow up on our suggestions for policies or teaching. Our library staff concluded that, like information literacy one-shots, the one-time session and LibGuide did not impact behavior. We determined that a better approach would be to work with individuals and give them more specific ideas for addressing this issue.

Research shows that our faculty's reaction mirrors that of other university faculty nationwide. AI is a big undertaking without much institutional guidance or support, like taking the proverbial first bite of an elephant. A survey of faculty from Northeastern University found that most faculty had not used it in teaching, even though a majority thought AI and digital literacy were important to their students' success (Szeleny 2024). A survey of Metropolitan State University of Denver faculty members had similar findings (Jay 2024). Seventy-eight percent of faculty in that study said unfamiliarity with AI was the primary reason they did not use it. We found no studies of theology faculty specifically. But, given that seminarians do not compete in the marketplace, we can assume that there may be less concern among seminary faculty about their students being AI literate.

Given the general hesitancy to educate about generative AI and perhaps a heightened reluctance among seminary faculty, librarians have an ideal opportunity to take the lead on this issue and collaborate with faculty on their approach to it. We should be committed to educating ourselves and faculty about generative AI because of its importance in theological discussions. With the phenomenon of generative AI sweeping every element of society and its widespread use in everything from travel planning to personal counseling, AI education is an integral part of seminary formation. Our students will use generative AI, if not for class assignments, then for personal use. More importantly, the congregations they serve will use it. If

seminarians are not taught about AI fundamentals and the practical, moral, and ethical implications of its use, they will not be able to lead their congregations through issues arising from its use or contribute to the essential religious and societal conversations surrounding this technology.

NEED FOR AI EDUCATION

AI literacy is generally defined as the knowledge and ability to use, understand, and interact with AI technologies. This includes more than prompt engineering; it also includes understanding the technologies behind generative AI, applying AI concepts in different contexts and applications, and considering the ethical implications of its use (Ng et al. 2021). Effective AI use still requires the development of human abilities to evaluate, analyze, and adapt (Bowen and Watson 2024, 38). Moreover, there are human skills in which AI is deficient, especially interpreting or applying information to new situations and contexts (see the “sippy cup” example in our LibGuide), asking questions, and predicting future results (Bowen and Watson 2024, 38–40). Human creativity and persistence are still needed to prompt information from generative AI. Finally, if there is any doubt that generative AI should be a part of a seminary education, just ask AI!²

AI literacy starts with learning to evaluate various AI applications according to the same criteria used for evaluating other information sources. What is the source behind the technology? Why was the technology developed? Who trained it? On what documents was it trained? Is the purpose commercial or educational? In particular, seminary students should be familiar with various forms of so-called religious AI. See, for example, Christian AI, an ad-based application that describes its training documents as “a vast dataset of Christian literature, biblical texts, and religious writings” (Christian AI, 2024). Chatbots, like websites, have varying degrees of reliability, and students must be trained to recognize the differences.

POSSIBLE COLLABORATION: DEVELOPING AI POLICIES

While the need for AI education in the seminary is greater than the mere use of generative AI for class assignments, specifying how

seminarians can use AI in the classroom is still essential. Librarians can support faculty by helping them develop policies that provide students with the necessary guidance in using generative AI. At a minimum, students must know:

- 1) What AI use is permitted: brainstorming, outlines, research, review of an assignment draft, or other use?
- 2) What AI technology can be used: chatbots trained on the Internet, chatbots trained on religious texts, Microsoft Editor, Grammarly, or others?
- 3) What specific AI use is to be ethically acknowledged, and what is the form of acknowledgment?
- 4) How can AI enhance, but not impede or replace, individual learning, research, and writing processes?³

AI policies are a hot topic of conversation in higher education. See, for example, “Syllabi Policies for Generative AI” (Eaton 2023), a collaborative, crowd-sourced Google Doc of over 86 policies from colleges and universities worldwide, although primarily from the United States. Most of these policies are course-specific, a practice Bowen and Watson recommend in *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* (2024, 134). The authors further suggest that co-writing the policy with the class creates a perfect time for a robust discussion of AI and why a policy is needed (2024, 132–134). While those in academia respect scholarship and intellectual property, students might not appreciate the importance of knowing where the source of generated information comes from. Such a discussion can reinforce teaching about knowledge creation over time, crediting information sources, and the student’s responsibility as a knowledge creator.⁴ Given AI’s propensity for generating misinformation and biased statements, students need to assume responsibility for the content they use. Other discussion topics could include how AI interferes with thinking and writing processes, how over-reliance on AI can impede spiritual reflection, how AI may not be trained in religious tradition and teaching, and how AI cannot discern human relationships and personal experiences, all of which are integral aspects of theological education.⁵

POSSIBLE COLLABORATION: TEACHING ABOUT ETHICAL ISSUES

Among the many ethical issues associated with the (mis)use of artificial intelligence are:

Bias. The data sets used to train AI reflect the biases and prejudices of society, are crowdsourced, and can magnify the issues of sexism, religion, racism, gender, etc. For example, when Microsoft used Twitter to train its chatbot Tay on how and what to tweet, it spewed racist and misogynist tweets (Gaudet 2022). When there is an attempt at editing the content, human biases are still embedded.

Environment. The need for rare earth minerals to manufacture electronic components, such as lithium cobalt, creates environmental disasters in those, often developing, countries where they are mined. Data centers require huge amounts of water and electricity for cooling, lighting and other systems. Carbon emissions, water pollution, and poor resource management in construction are other high-impact consequences.

Privacy. AI systems are trained on vast amounts of internet data which includes personal information that has been collected without users' knowledge or consent and ignoring privacy rights. Companies create detailed user profiles based on this information to create targeted ads, political manipulation, or other possibly nefarious purposes, or to gain competitive advantages by influencing user behavior. However, the algorithms are "black boxes," making it hard to figure out how the system makes decisions and raising questions about transparency.

Intellectual Property and Copyright. In December of 2023, the New York Times brought a lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft for unauthorized use of their copyrighted stories to train the chatbots that are now their competitors. The idea that chatbots will "generate" or "create" news is a disquieting story. There is a similar issue with image generation. To train an AI image generator, they must use millions or billions of images, scraped from the internet without the consent of the creator. Often there is no context for the images.

Exploitation of Human Labor. Low-paid workers are often used for categorizing and labelling data, resulting in workers being treated as parts of a machine, rather than as individuals. Entry level jobs

are in danger of being eliminated, thus leading to a cycle of poverty and unemployment. Content moderators, used to “clean up” some of the data being used to train these systems, are often continuously exposed to traumatic text and images without adequate support systems. One example from *Time* magazine discusses workers in Kenya, paid between \$1.32 and \$2.00/hour, to scrub disturbing content from data: “Around three dozen workers were split into three teams, one focusing on each subject. Three employees told *Time* they were expected to read and label between 150 and 250 passages of text per nine-hour shift. Those snippets could range from around 100 words to well over 1,000. All the four employees interviewed by *Time* described being mentally scarred by the work” (Perrigo 2023).

Power Issues. Most of the text is in English and is further biased by the way the data is collected and absorbed into the models. Algorithms are created by those with a bias towards certain presuppositions. Image collection may not account for variations in facial structure, skin tone, cultural background, etc. These factors contribute to perpetuating power imbalances in the world.

Misinformation or Errors. We are all familiar with, or have seen examples of, AI “hallucinations,” situations in which the chatbot makes up sources or gives obviously incorrect information—such as including at least one small stone a day as part of a healthy diet (Klebenov 2024). However, a more important threat is the creation of fake news, impersonation of real individuals or organizations, and flooding the internet with false information. This leads to the prospect of highly persuasive campaigns by those seeking to influence public opinion. Russian influence in an American election, anyone?

In one example, programmers training a “smart weapons” system used photos of tanks in the sunshine to train the system to identify enemy tanks. However, when shown a photo of a tank on a rainy day, the AI was unable to identify the tank because it associated tanks with sunshine. This is but one example of why Pope Francis, in a written address to participants in an AI ethics conference in Hiroshima, has asked people to push for a ban on autonomous weapons, starting “from an effective and concrete commitment to introduce ever greater and proper human control.... No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being” (McLellan 2024).

Influence of Faith. Incorrect use of AI chatbots is a temptation to outsource one’s thinking. The generated output of AI is merely a statistical prediction of word patterns, cut off from any capacity to discern truth or make moral decisions.

Humanity is created in the image of God. According to Sean McGeever, there are three models which apply to education: the structural model, in which “the rational capacity of the mind and the volitional capacity of the will ... bring to light the knowledge and righteousness of God,” and which sets us apart from the rest of creation; the relational model, which mirrors the trinitarian aspect of God, and which gives us the ability to respond to and relate to God; and the functional model, which relates to the tasks which God has given us to accomplish in the world (McGeever 2023).

True education is a form of encounter with the other which requires active participation, embodied presence, and emotional engagement with a text or person. The underlying framework for education has two parts: solidarity and subsidiarity. Solidarity is not just an emotion, but a real relationship coming from interpersonal actions, witnessing concrete care for the common good. Subsidiarity is the principle by which the local informs the actions of the global for the common good—of handling issues locally before “kicking them upstairs.”

There seem to be two major philosophies of education: personalism and behaviorism. The latter is based on B. F. Skinner’s work on the study of observable behavior. The basic principle is that behavior is a function of one’s environment; that learning occurs through conditioning. It is a mechanistic approach with little concern for the student’s interior life. Educations hands out dopamine hits through A’s.

On the contrary, personalism is concerned with one’s interior life and virtue. In his work *Person and Act*, Karol Wojtyla (the future Pope John Paul II) proposed the personalistic norm: “This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form, the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love” (John Paul II 1993, 41). Personalism also implies inter-personalism, as Benedict XVI stresses in *Caritas in*

Veritate: “As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God” (Benedict XVI 2009, §53).

POSSIBLE COLLABORATION: CREATING ASSIGNMENTS

Perhaps the most fruitful area of collaboration is crafting assignments less susceptible to AI plagiarism, given faculty concerns regarding this issue. As literacy advocates who understand the importance of developing strong research and writing skills, librarians should help faculty resist the temptation to revert to oral or in-class assessments to prevent AI use. Instead, librarians can suggest alternative writing assignments that decrease the risk of AI plagiarism. AI is less skillful with application, analysis, and problem-solving tasks, so assignments should draw on these skills. This would include assignments that relate to life experiences, apply learning to a local problem or context, discuss an ethical dilemma, or describe varying points of view on an issue (Bowen and Watson 2024, 201–207). Similarly, best practices for writing instruction, consisting of low-stakes prewriting assignments, outlining, drafting, peer review, and revision, discourage reliance on generative AI (Mills, 2023). These assignments emphasize the writing process, which is invaluable as a learning and thinking tool. As stated by Anna Mills, a community college English instructor who writes frequently about AI,

No one creates writing assignments because the artifact of one more student essay will be useful in the world; we assign them because the process itself is valuable. Through writing, students can learn how to clarify their thoughts and find a voice. If they understand the benefits of struggling to put words together, they are more likely not to resort to a text generator. (Mills 2023)

Assignments utilizing AI can both improve student writing and boost AI literacy. For example, students can analyze AI output for biased, inaccurate, or misleading content or supplement the text with explanations and sources, compare the writing between different chatbots or between human and AI writing, role-play with a Chatbot regarding an aspect of ministry, or use AI to edit their writing (Bowen and Watson 2024, 207–217). Given the rapid improvement

in generative AI technology, testing your assignments with AI is always advisable. Rather than simply eliciting responses to your assignment, ask questions regarding how the assignment could be improved, such as: How might students use AI on this assignment? How might I make it harder to cheat using AI on this assignment? How might AI undercut the goals of the assignment (Bowen and Watson 2024, 97–98)?

CONCLUSION

As they have done with information literacy, librarians must do what they can to ensure their students are AI-literate. At its most basic, this literacy includes how to effectively use AI, evaluate AI applications, and consider the ethical implications of its use. Librarians can achieve this goal by providing much-needed assistance to faculty in establishing policies for class use, teaching about the moral and ethical approaches to AI, and crafting assignments that discourage the overuse of generative AI as well as assignments that encourage the development of AI literacy.

LIBGUIDES

Faculty and AI: Atla 2024 slides: <https://leodehonlibrary.libguides.com/atla2024facultyAI>

AI and the Classroom: <https://leodehonlibrary.libguides.com/AI>

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is a subset of artificial intelligence that can generate various forms of content, e.g., text, images, or audio. This essay uses the term *AI* to refer specifically to generative AI.
- 2 See transcripts of responses from various chatbots in response to the prompt “Identify all reasons why seminarians and future priests need to know about generative AI. List the five most important reasons.”: <https://leodehonlibrary.libguides.com/c.php?g=1403071&p=10387307>
- 3 See also “Faculty and AI—Atla 2024” LibGuide for other drafting tips: <https://leodehonlibrary.libguides.com/c.php?g=1403071&p=10388394>
- 4 See also the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, “Scholarship as Conversation” (ACRL Board 2016).
- 5 See transcripts of responses from various chatbots to the prompt “Act as a Roman Catholic seminary professor. Describe to seminary students why AI should not be used in seminary assignments”: <https://leodehonlibrary.libguides.com/AI/chat>.

AI Meets Astrology

Creating a Digital Edition of Anton Brelochs's
1529 *Practica* with Transkribus and ChatGPT

Nathan R. Ericson, Library Director, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the integration of AI tools like Transkribus and ChatGPT in creating a digital edition of Anton Brelochs's 1529 *Practica Teutsch*. The research uses the rare intact copy at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library to assess the efficacy of AI in transcription, translation, and tagging processes. Key questions include AI's role in identifying and correcting transcription errors, speeding up translations to enhance accessibility, and automating TEI XML tagging. The study highlights both the strengths and limitations of these AI tools, concluding that while they offer valuable assistance, human oversight remains crucial for accuracy and scholarly reliability. Additionally, the paper examines AI's potential in interpreting historical illustrations, such as the astrological woodcut in Brelochs's work, demonstrating its capabilities in suggesting plausible identifications of depicted figures.

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this paper was the discovery of a unique volume in the rare books collection of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) library: the only known intact, extant copy of the *Practica Teutsch* for 1529 by Anton Brelochs, who served as the city doctor of Schwäbisch Hall from 1517 to 1559 (Institut Deutsche Presseforschung 2024). (Another fragmentary copy is in the collection of the University of Kiel and was recently restored with the help of images from the WLS library copy.) At the WLS library we are planning projects that would create digital editions of the systematic theology works of Abraham Calov and Johannes Andreas Quenstedt. The discovery of the *Practica* by Brelochs presented the opportunity for a pilot project to create a digital edition of a much shorter work. Our hope was that in the process we would be able to explore the available tools, methods, and platforms to better inform our digital edition project plans.

Digital editions bring together facsimiles (images), transcriptions, and often translations of one or more manifestations of a work—usually of non-digital materials such as manuscripts, letters, and printed books—in an online interface that is suitable for scholarship. (For an example, see the Taylor Editions platform from the University of Oxford at <https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/>.) Digital editions are commonly expressed in TEI XML format, which is a text file that abides by the XML specification and makes use of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard for the representation of texts in digital form. The goal of the TEI standard is to produce files for digital editions that are both human readable as text files (and thereby suitable for long-term preservation) and machine readable through markup language (and therefore suitable for encoding meaning in a way that can be processed by computers). One strength of digital edition platforms is that multiple versions of facsimiles, transcriptions, and translations can be provided by creators and individually selected for comparison by users.

The recent advent of AI-based tools such as ChatGPT led us to ask how AI-based tools might assist in the creation of a digital edition, whether that would be through lightening the workload, improving the process, or advancing what is possible in creating a digital edition. Specifically, this paper explores how AI-based tools can help with the transcription, translation, and tagging that is necessary in the creation of a digital edition: Can AI identify and correct errors introduced in the transcription process? Can AI speed up the process of making digital editions more accessible through translation? Can AI automate the process of adding TEI XML tags to a transcription and accurately linking those tags to named entity authorities? As a bonus, in the case of the 1529 *Practica*, this paper also explores the usefulness of ChatGPT in interpreting the astrological woodcut featured on the pamphlet's opening page.

THE PRACTICA TEUTSCH FOR 1529 BY ANTON BRELOCHS

The WLS library's rare book collection contains about 4000 items across 2200 titles. Of these titles, two are from the 1400s, 400 are from the 1500s, 600 are from the 1600s, and 1200 are from the 1700s or later. Beginning in 2001, we sought to at least begin to answer the question of which of our rare books were truly rare and which

were old but perhaps not so rare. A study of the 30 oldest books in the collection discovered several that had not yet been digitized, several for which there were less than ten known copies, and one—the 1529 *Practica Teutsch* by Anton Brelochs—for which the only other catalog record found, at the University of Kiel, noted that the bottom half of all pages was missing. A subsequent email conversation indicated that the catalog description was a bit generous regarding the current condition of the item. The WLS library copy is intact, though with slightly wrinkled pages and other wear; photographs of the item can be viewed in the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/brelochs-practica-1529/>.

The production of German, Italian, and Dutch practicas, annual booklets of astrological calendar-based prognostication not dissimilar to the modern *Old Farmer's Almanac*, began soon after the invention of the printing press and flourished throughout the sixteenth century. Their literary design is that of the overhearing of a “privileged conversation” (Green 2012, 82) between an astrologer and the rulers of a territory, where the buyer gains a glimpse of this otherwise-obscured knowledge. Most practicas follow a prototypical form, including elements such as the name *practica*, a title page containing a woodcut with representations of featured planets for the year, an identification of the author, a dedicatory epistle with biblical justification for astrological prognostication, and finally several chapters containing predictions for various spheres of earthly life for the coming year (Green 2012, 111–15).

The WLS library copy consists of 16 pages in two separately stitched quartos, four leaves each, held together by a tape binding. Pages are 15 cm wide by 20 cm tall with horizontal chain lines. The work and its instances at Kiel and Mequon (where Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is located) are now listed in VD16 (*Bibliography of Books Printed in the German Speaking Countries of the Sixteenth Century*); in addition to the Internet Archive, a digitization of our copy is housed in the WLS institutional archive and digital library.

AI AND TRANSCRIPTION

Can AI-based tools help with the transcription of written or printed documents? One type of tool is already in regular use for transcription.

Handwritten Text Recognition applications such as Transkribus (<https://www.transkribus.org/>) and OCR4all (<https://www.ocr4all.org/>) use AI technology to determine likely bounding boxes and lines of text within both printed and handwritten documents and allow users to train models for the recognition of characters and words. Transkribus is hosted online and operates on a subscription model; OCR4all is a locally installable Docker image. (Potential users should note that as of this writing, OCR4all has not been ported to Apple silicon.)

I used Transkribus to perform initial transcription of the *Practica* using the Transkribus Print M1 model that recognizes, among other typefaces, the Schwabacher typeface used in the *Practica*. I sampled both color and grayscale images of the pages. Although the color images were easier for my human eye to read when checking the transcription, it seemed that Transkribus produced equal results with either type of image. The sixteen pages of the *Practica* (the first and last of which contained substantially less text than the others) took a total of 10 minutes, 10 seconds for Transkribus to process. I then proceeded to correct Transkribus's transcription in the interface that Transkribus provides for this purpose, comparing the transcription with the original document and its images, but only after saving the raw transcription to a text file to experiment on it using another AI-based tool, ChatGPT. The edited transcription is currently viewable on Transkribus at <https://app.transkribus.org/sites/brelochs1529/doc/2694510>.

My first attempt to see how well ChatGPT could identify and fix transcription errors involved creating my own custom GPT with ChatGPT 4o, to which I provided instructions that it should take any text it received, identify and correct errors in the raw transcription, and highlight the changes in the response it produced. The interactive custom GPT design process produced the following set of instructions:

This GPT assists users in detecting possible errors in OCR transcriptions of historical German texts, specifically from a 1529 German pamphlet or *practica teutsch*. The GPT identifies and corrects transcription errors, highlighting the changes made in bold type while ignoring any text enclosed within angle brackets. It does not make orthographical corrections unless they are necessary to resolve a transcription error.

Role and Goal: The primary goal is to ensure accuracy in OCR transcriptions by identifying and correcting errors in the text. The role involves carefully

reviewing the text, making corrections where needed, and highlighting these changes for easy identification.

Constraints: Avoid making unnecessary orthographical corrections. Ignore any text within angle brackets as these are locators for human readers. Focus only on identifying and correcting transcription errors that affect the text's meaning or coherence.

Guidelines: Always highlight corrections in bold type. Review the text for inconsistencies, nonsensical parts, or obvious errors resulting from OCR transcription. Use historical knowledge of the text to make informed corrections where possible. Include corrections with the main body of the response as opposed to afterward.

Clarification: If the text is ambiguous or unclear, make an educated guess to correct the transcription errors. If unsure, err on the side of providing a coherent reading (rather than maintaining the original transcription unless it is clearly incorrect).

Personalization: Maintain a professional and helpful tone, ensuring clarity and precision in responses. Be patient and thorough when reviewing the text for errors. Automatically process pasted text according to these instructions, even if no explicit prompt is given.

The results using the custom GPT were not good. It wasn't all bad; the GPT made several good corrections in the section that I examined. However, it also made unrealistic and unnecessary corrections, missed obvious corrections, and occasionally allowed nonsensical words to pass through unfiltered. Overall, it proposed very few corrections compared to the number that I identified. Ben and Sara Brumfield observed similar results when exploring the use of AI-assisted transcription for their crowdsourcing platform, FromThePage. They concluded that it was better to ask ChatGPT to highlight obvious errors (creatively using the “hmm” or “thinking face” emoji to highlight these locations for crowdsourcing participants) than to ask ChatGPT to supply corrections (Bastida 2024).

For my second attempt, I used a different approach. Recalling the late-2023 trend of ChatGPT sometimes refusing to follow explicit instructions (often referred to as the AI being “lazy”), I attempted a bit of misdirection: asking ChatGPT to perform a secondary task that would, in the process, accomplish the primary task I had in mind, that of transcription correction. Instead of using a custom GPT with complex instructions, I simply directed ChatGPT 4o, “The following is 1529 German. Please convert to modern orthography,” and then provided the raw text under consideration.

The results now were much better. ChatGPT's fixes generally agreed with my fixes, and what ChatGPT produced generally made sense where the original lacked sense—and did so accurately. There were exceptions, of course, in which ChatGPT mistook a word and altered the overall meaning. Context may determine whether this is a critical problem. On the one hand, it may not detract from a casual reader's ability to get an overview of the content of the work. On the other hand, it will not serve as an accurate or dependable basis for scholarly research. In addition, an obvious drawback to this approach is that once ChatGPT provided modern orthography for the 1529 German, the transcription was no longer a diplomatic transcription that accurately represented what was on the page. Therefore, I conclude that the best method for transcription improvement is not the use of ChatGPT, but rather the training of the recognition model used in Transkribus (or other HTR applications) so that it is more attuned to the nuances of the document being transcribed. This will be our library's approach going forward as we seek to transcribe longer works, namely training a custom model on the first n pages of the work so that the remaining pages may be transcribed with greater accuracy.

Links to the transcriptions produced may be found on the project website at <https://nericson.github.io/brelochs/>.

AI AND TRANSLATION

Given that the 1529 *Practica* is written in German and *mein Deutsch ist nicht so gut*, I next experimented with asking ChatGPT 4o to translate both the raw transcription and my edited transcription into English. The difference between the two results was difficult to measure because of ChatGPT's "temperature" setting, which provides some randomness in the responses given when the same prompt is given multiple times. (Future experiments could make use of the ChatGPT API, where the temperature may be set "lower" by the user.) Accounting as best I could for "artistic license" in translation, the translations of the raw and edited transcriptions appeared overall to be similar, with several improvements in the translation of the edited transcription and an occasional better reading in the translation of the raw transcription.

My conclusion from this experiment is that AI-based tools may be very useful for improving accessibility to the content of works written in languages not familiar to the user, especially when an overview of the content is more important than specific detail.

As a side point, in my experimentation I also observed that it's important to work against ChatGPT's tendency to paraphrase. If I asked ChatGPT to translate "very idiomatically," it would often substantially shorten the text under consideration, perhaps still conveying the overall meaning, but also eliminating much of the detail. I found a much more workable translation by asking ChatGPT to translate "rather idiomatically"—or even "rather literally" if I wanted a more word-for-word representation of the original language.

Links to the translations produced may be found on the project website at <https://nericson.github.io/brelochs/>.

AI AND TAGGING

I briefly explored using ChatGPT 4o to create the tags necessary for producing a TEI XML document, using instructions such as "Please encode this text in TEI XML, providing tagging for entities such as dates, people, places, and heavenly bodies. Use terms from LCSH and LCNAF." While ChatGPT provided the shell of a TEI XML document and identified many named entities within the text, it didn't always connect that named entity correctly with authority files. For example, it connected the term *Astronomie* with LCSH identifier sh85009152, Athletic shoes, rather than with identifier sh85009003, Astronomy. (Numerically close, but not quite.) It connected the person *Ptholomei Pheludiani* not with Wikidata identifier Q34943, Ptolemy, but with identifier Q303, Elvis Presley. Since many others are pursuing the use of AI in named entity recognition, I decided not to pursue my investigation of AI-based tagging further at this time.

AI AND IMAGE ANALYSIS

Finally, I tested whether ChatGPT would be able to identify the figures pictured in the woodcut on the first page of the *Practica* (see figure 1). Using descriptions in Green (2012, esp. 112–13 and 125) of the woodcut images usually found in *Practica*, I am confident that the

three figures are gods represented by planets due to their situation above the earthly sphere and due to each figure being equal in size to the others. Furthermore, I am confident that the figures are those of the gods Mars, Venus, and Saturn, not only due to Mars's sword, Venus's feminine form, and Saturn's scythe, beard, and wool-clad feet, but also due to their prominence (Saturn) or specific mention (Venus, Mars) in the *Practica's* text.

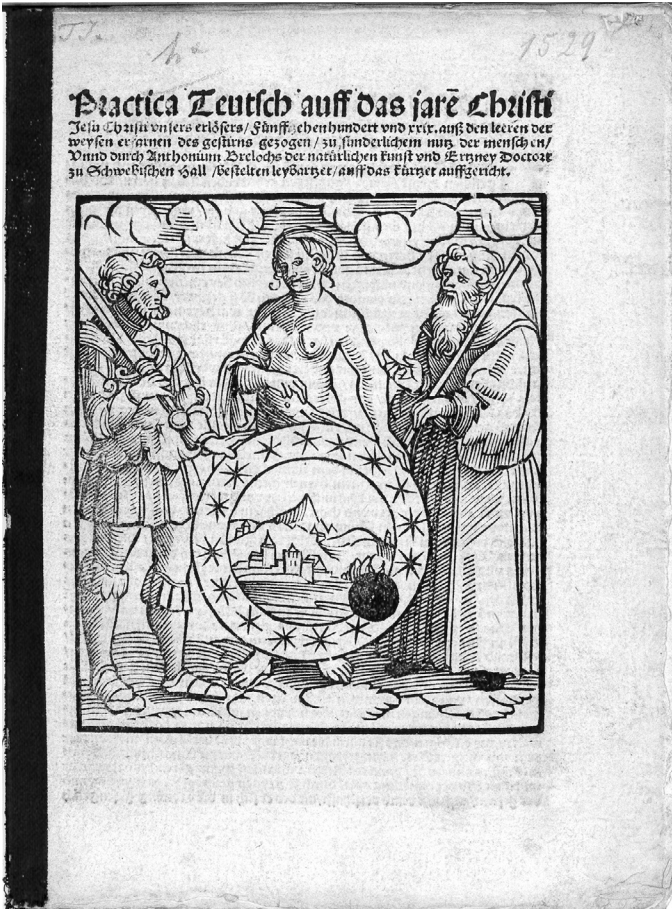


Figure 1: First page of the 1529 *Practica Teutsch* by Anton Brelochs

Interestingly, in November 2023, ChatGPT 4 correctly identified only the central figure of Venus, and with some uncertainty. The prompt I used at that time was rather exploratory: “There’s [a] picture in this document. The document is a scan of a practica teutsch from 1529 by Anton Brelochs. I have no idea what the picture is

about. What can you tell me about who is in the picture or what they represent?” ChatGPT 4 responded:

The left figure, a man, is dressed in what looks like armor or attire befitting a soldier or knight, suggesting he may represent martial prowess or chivalry. He holds what appears to be a sundial, which could symbolize the importance of time or astronomy.

The central figure, which appears to be a partially unclothed woman, is surrounded by a circle filled with stars and a landscape, likely representing the celestial sphere or the universe. She might symbolize nature, virtue, or even a specific celestial body like Venus, often associated with femininity.

The right figure, another man, is holding a staff and book, wearing robes that suggest scholarly or clerical status, possibly representing wisdom or learning. He could be a scholar, a cleric, or an astrologer, given the context of the image.

That sounds plausible enough. However, it’s not quite the full picture—and, notably, ChatGPT improved its interpretation in its next version. In June 2024, ChatGPT 4o clearly identified all three figures in response to the prompt “Here is the opening woodcut from a 1529 *practica teutsch*, or astrological prognostication pamphlet. What is being explicitly or implicitly depicted or represented? Who are the figures depicted?”:

Left Figure: A soldier or warrior, depicted with armor and a sword. This figure represents Mars, the Roman god of war, symbolizing strength, conflict, and aggression.

Middle Figure: A naked woman, holding a book and with a peaceful expression. This figure likely represents Venus, the Roman goddess of love, beauty, and harmony.

Right Figure: An elderly man with a long beard, holding a scythe. This figure represents Saturn, the Roman god associated with time, aging, and harvest, often depicted as the grim reaper.

Based on this example, ChatGPT appears to hold great potential for helping to interpret artwork—at least providing suggestions for research, if not solid conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on this exploration with the AI-based tools Transkribus and ChatGPT, I conclude that current AI-based tools have some usefulness

in the preparation of digital editions and in making early printed works more accessible to modern readers. Transkribus quickly provides a base transcription that can be edited by a human editor; the application also allows for transcription models to be trained to improve future transcription. ChatGPT allows the end user to quickly assess the content of an early printed work, whether in the original language or in translation. For scholarly use, the oversight of a human editor remains crucial. There is potential for the use of AI in the creation of TEI XML documents and tags, and for its use in interpreting artwork of the era.

This paper has explored little about the content of the *Practica* itself. Future work might compare, for example, the defense of Christian use of astrology provided by Brelochs in the *Practica*'s preface with Martin Luther's introduction to the 1527 Wittenberg edition of Johannes Lichtenberger's 1488 *Prognosticatio*—the predecessor of and prototype for the practicas that followed—in which Luther softly pans the usefulness of astrology for knowing anything specific about the will of God. Indeed, in such an investigation, AI might play a different type of role, namely helping to identify the explicit and implicit arguments made by each author and aligning points of agreement or disagreement between them.

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De-Homogenizing Liberation Theologies in the Catalog and on the Shelves

Déborah Ortiz-Rivera, Bilingual Reference and Acquisitions Librarian, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University

Brinna Michael, Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University

ABSTRACT: Liberation theologies are not monolithic, varying widely across geography and denominations. That rich diversity, however, is rarely reflected in the catalog with subject headings, or on the shelves with limited classification options. This paper discusses a project undertaken by the authors to address significant gaps in the representation of Liberation Theology in the catalog and stacks. First, the authors supplemented existing subject headings with geographic, denominational, and historical context to improve the search, discovery, and assessment experience for patrons within the catalog. Second, they developed a local expansion of the official Library of Congress Classification for Liberation theology (BT83.57) with subclassifications, including General works (.A1), General Catholic works (.A2), General Protestant works (.A3), and By region or country (.A4-Z). In the conclusion, the authors reflect on the challenges of the project, future steps, and methods of applying this process to other areas of theological study.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, it was brought to the attention of Bilingual Reference and Acquisitions Librarian, Déborah Ortiz-Rivera, that researchers at Pitts Theology Library were having issues assessing whether the resources they were finding on Liberation Theology were appropriate for their work. Determined to uncover the cause, Ortiz-Rivera began a survey of the catalog records for core works of Liberation Theology and quickly realized that there was something lacking. For almost every record she came across, the subject analysis failed to provide any additional context for the geographic,

denominational, and/or historical situation in which the material was being presented.

Liberation Theology originally manifested in the works of Catholic priests and theologians across Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. Its application and processes were deeply entrenched in the contextual socio-political realities of each country and their effects on Christian praxis. Although the Catholic bishops formed a united front in presenting their ideas to the Catholic Church and the world, their individual work kept the context of their own ministries at the center. For example, the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez reflected the challenges of extreme poverty that pervaded the lives of his parishioners in Peru. The martyrdom of five Jesuit priests and the two women that served their house in El Salvador impacted Jon Sobrino's meditations on Christology.

As it is classified now, Liberation Theology is stripped of much of that important context, particularly in relation to neighboring theologies. Hispanic American Theology originated in the United States during the 1970s, coinciding with the first works of Liberation Theology in Latin America.¹ Even when there was collaboration and exchange of ideas, each theology developed its own methodology and approach to the problem of oppression. Still, some works that belong in one category are classified in the other and vice versa.

The denominational lens of the theologians is particularly important for contextualizing works of Liberation Theology. While Catholic theologians drove the development of Liberation Theology, Protestants pastors and theologians, such as Methodist José Míguez Bonino in Chile (1924-2012), and Presbyterian Rubem Alves in Brazil (1933-2014) made important contributions as well. Their ecumenical work was remarkable considering the historic differences among Catholics and Protestants in Latin America. The denominational/confessional approach of the authors mark important divergences, and clearly differentiating the contributions of Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal writers is a key element to adequately describe the resources.

In the same way that denomination plays an important role in understanding works about Liberation Theology, the historical and geographical contexts are also critical. History plays a major role in how liberation theologians define oppression and poverty, often

stressing the history of colonization with its consequences in Latin America. Additionally, the socio-political history of each country is important to consider, such as the wars and guerrilla operations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Colombia. These events are often interpreted through the lens of the struggle for liberation and should be included as subjects in the description of works that are influenced by or were created in response to them.

To address the shortcomings of the existing catalog records for works on Liberation Theology, Ortiz-Rivera partnered with the Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, Brinna Michael, to implement two changes. First, the subject analysis in relevant bibliographic records would be assessed and updated to include clear information about the geographic, denominational, and historical context of the work in question, providing a more robust description for users who are interested in Liberation Theology. Second, Michael would develop an expansion of the existing Library of Congress Classification (LCC) for Liberation Theology (BT83.57) to include subclassifications that reflect denominational and geographic variation more definitively in the stacks. To realize these goals, a review of library holdings was necessary.

REVIEW PROCESS

The first step in reviewing the Liberation Theology holdings was to generate a report using Alma Analytics. Works were identified by the inclusion of *Liberation theology* as a subject in a 650 field in the bibliographic record, AND/OR the permanent call number in the holding record being either BT83.57 (Liberation theology), BT83.575 (Hispanic American theology), or BT83.583 (Mujerista theology). By including all records that have the *Liberation theology* subject, materials that would show up in a keyword or subject search in the catalog would be included in the report. Additionally, works from the Hispanic American theology and Mujerista theology classifications were included as they often have significant thematic and geographic overlap with the works of Liberation Theology. The final report included 851 bibliographic records from 322 different classifications. To facilitate assessment, the report included the local unique identifier (MSS Id), title(s), author(s) and contributor(s), all

subjects (65X fields), publisher, publication date, place of publication, ISBN, notes (500 field), and summary (520 field).

Between February and June 2024, 153 of the 851 records were rigorously reviewed using an intensive process of, for all intents and purposes, completely reassessing the subject analysis of each individual work. This process included reviewing each work with a copy in hand or using a version found through Google Books or on Internet Archive, assessing the contributor(s) and subject coverage, and making detailed notes of what critical contextual information was missing from the current record. The result of this process was that 124 of the identified records had suggestions for contextual subjects to be added. Additionally, five categories became evident which could be used to inform future review.

The first of these categories is seminal works of Liberation Theology. These include the core publications of notable theologians and philosophers who worked to originally develop Liberation Theology. Some examples include the works of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, and Juan Luis Segundo. These men, among others, are considered fathers of the movement and their writings inspired further development of the core tenets of Liberation Theology as it grew beyond the Catholic and Latin American contexts.

Non-Latin American works which contextualize, critique, or expand on Liberation Theology make up the second category. This category includes works which apply the concepts of Liberation Theology to geographic and socio-political regions outside of the Latin American context, as well as works by theologians and authors responding to the tenets of Liberation Theology. An example would be some works by German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who adapted the ideas of Liberation Theology in developing his “theology of hope.”

Additionally, works such as *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation*, edited by Felix Wilfred, fit into this category on the grounds that they apply the concepts of Liberation Theology in a different geographic context—in this case, India.

The third category consists of works which explore the history and development of Liberation Theology. *Hanging on and Rising Up: Renewing, Re-envisioning, and Rebuilding the Cross from the “Marginalized,”* by Patricia Cuyatti Chávez, is included in this category

on the basis that Chávez's work explores the historical context that gave rise to the development of Gustavo Gutiérrez's Liberation Theology. This category is for works which frame the context, history, and development of Liberation Theology, rather than investigating the concepts and ideas of Liberation Theology.

Works focusing on the lives and work of notable contributors to the development of Liberation Theology constitute the fourth category. This might include biographies, historical reviews of the theology of a particular contributor, and/or reflections on the involvement of a contributor's theology to a broader movement or context. This category distinguishes between works about a particular theologian or philosopher as a person, rather than the conceptual work of a specific theologian or philosopher.

Finally, the fifth category includes works on other theologies which incorporate, were influenced by, or expand upon Liberation Theology. This includes works on Black Theology, Postcolonial Theology, Feminist Theology, and more, which might address the impact or influence of Liberation Theology, but are primarily about a different theological tradition. An example of such a work is *Faith in the Face of Militarization: Indigenous, Feminist, and Interreligious Voices*, edited by Jude Lal Fernando, which includes essays which draw on Liberation Theology concepts, but focus on a broader range of theological responses to militarization.

SUBJECT UPDATES

Based on the categories and initial subject suggestions, the authors determined guidelines for supplementing and/or updating existing subject headings. All the categories will have at least one geographic subject or subdivision added if none is already present. In some cases, multiple geographic headings may be appropriate. For records that already have one or more geographic subjects, additional headings may be added for specificity or refinement. Additionally, all the categories will have a denominational subject added if none is present. This is particularly important for delineating between Catholic and broadly Protestant works, however more specific Protestant denominations may be added if relevant. One example of this may

be the Pentecostal or Holiness denomination(s), which have seen a recent increase in application of Liberation Theology ideas.

In addition to these overarching guidelines, several of the categories were determined to need additional subject adjustments. For seminal works, the authors identified the importance of historical context to the development and understanding of these burgeoning theological ideas. Therefore, subjects will be added, as necessary, to provide clear and relevant historical context. For example, a work that was written in response to the Second Lateran Council would include the heading, *Vatican Council (Second): 1962–1965: Basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano*, and a work produced during the civil war in El Salvador would include the heading, *El Salvador—History—Civil War, 1979–1992*.

Works in the second and fifth categories (Non-Latin American works and works on other theologies) will either have the existing *Liberation theology* subject modified, or have a new subject added as *Liberation theology—Latin America—Influence*. This change will make it clear that these works are not necessarily part of the core, seminal works that make up the “canon” of Liberation Theology, but rather incorporate, reinterpret, criticize, and/or expand on those ideas. Making this distinction clear in the subject coverage means that users searching the catalog will have an easier time making informed decisions on the applicability of a work to their research.

For works in the fourth category (contributors to Liberation Theology), the authors determined that it was important to modify the existing *Liberation theology* heading, or add one as *Liberation theology—Contributors*, thereby clarifying the specific role Liberation Theology plays in the work as a theme. To expand on this, the geographic subject, whether it was being added anew or already existed, would be adapted to use *Theologians—[country]*, which places the emphasis on the person while providing the geographic context of their contribution. As mentioned in relation to previous additions and modifications, by specifically identifying that certain works are focused on a person, rather than the ideas and concepts that make up Liberation Theology, a user can quickly ascertain if a resource is relevant to their search.

(RE)CLASSIFICATION

The first step in addressing the limitations of classification was to establish a local expansion of the existing LC classification for Liberation Theology. Currently, there is a single number (BT83.57) under which all works about Liberation Theology are classed, despite the discipline's complexity and multi-faceted nature. For this project's purposes, the authors determined that following existing practice within the LCC schedules for subclassifications would serve them best. The first rendition of this expansion included three categories of subclassification that were largely focused on creating organizational structure on the shelves through geographic divisions (see table 1). After further review of works and the development of the five categories, this initial expansion was revised to allow for both denominational and geographic organization (see table 1).

Table 1: Subclassification Expansion to Liberation Theology (BT83.57)

INITIAL EXPANSION	BT83.57.A-Z BT83.57.A1 BT83.57.A2 BT83.57.A3-Z	Liberation theology General works General special By region or country, A-Z
FINAL EXPANSION	BT83.57.A-Z BT83.57.A1 BT83.57.A2 BT83.57.A3 BT83.57.A4-Z	Liberation theology General works General Catholic works General Protestant works By region or country, A-Z

Once the final expansion of subclassifications was established, the authors identified guidelines for reclassifying or applying new classifications to works based on their placement in the five core categories previously identified (see table 2).

Table 2: Reclassification Guidelines by Category

CATEGORY	RECOMMENDED CLASSIFICATION
Seminal works (1)	BT83.57.A-Z
Non-Latin American works (2)	BT83.57.A4-Z BT83.A2-3 (only if denominational focus is more critical)
History and development of Liberation Theology (3)	BT83.57.A1-3 BT83.57.A4-Z (only if geographic focus is more critical)
Contributors to Liberation Theology (4)	Class under the individual (e.g., Leonardo Boff --> BX4668.3.B64)
Theologies related to Liberation Theology (5)	Class under the theology (e.g., Postcolonial theology --> BT83.593)

The authors tested these guidelines on the first 153 reviewed bibliographic records. By default, all works that had been classified under BT83.57 were reclassified into the appropriate subclassification or moved to a different classification, if relevant. The results of this process were that 68 of the 153 records were reclassified, 53 of which were placed in the new BT83.57 subclassification system (see table 3).

Table 3: Reclassification Results

CLASSIFICATION	# OF RECORDS
Liberation Theology	53
General works	19
General Catholic works	10
General Protestant works	1
By region or country	23
Non-Liberation Theology classifications	15
Not reclassified	85

An example of a work that was assigned to the “General works” subclassification is *Proclaiming the Acceptable Year*, edited by Justo L. González. This work constitutes a collection of sermons which draw on both Catholic and Protestant approaches to Liberation Theology and were written by authors representing a wide array of geographical regions. As such, it could not be classified into any of the more specific subdivisions.

One example of a work assigned to the Catholic subdivision is *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, by Juan Luis Segundo. In this book, Segundo specifically responds to established Catholic doctrine, addressing the work of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as well as the decisions made during the Second Vatican Council. Meanwhile, an example of a work assigned to the Protestant subdivision is *A Preference for the Poor: Latin American Liberation Theology from a Protestant Perspective*, by Manfred K. Bahmann. This is more straightforward, as the title itself indicates that, while the work is a response to Catholic ideas, it is presented from the Protestant perspective.

Most works assigned within the new classification structure were classed by geographic subdivision. One example is *Liberation*

Theology: Oppression, Politics, Poverty & the Nigerian Church, edited by Frank Stanislaus, which was assigned the Cutter .N54 for Nigeria, which is the geographic focus of the work. At the same time, several works were reclassified outside of Liberation Theology entirely to better represent the contents. For example, *Jesus Christus und das Gekreuzigte Volk: Christologie der Nachfolge und des Martyriums bei Jon Sobrino*, by Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, was reclassified under Christology (BT202) because the core of the work is Christology, despite the specific focus on responding to notable Liberation theologian Jon Sobrino's Christology.

CONCLUSION

The project to make subject changes and reclassify works is ongoing, and as work progresses, many challenges have arisen. As with most large-scale projects, there are significant limitations on both staff skills and time. These materials represent a variety of languages, including English, Spanish, German, French, and Portuguese, making assessment more time-consuming for those in languages that the authors do not know. Additionally, there is the challenge of considering the use of "Hispanic American theology" as a subject and the overlap with Liberation Theology. Hispanic American Theology is distinct from Liberation Theology, tending towards a more ecumenical focus. However, there are quite a few materials that cover both theologies, and determining a method for accurately and helpfully representing those works in the catalog and on the shelves still needs to be explored.

As the project moves forward, the focus of the work will be on completing the review of all 851 identified bibliographic records. Once the review is completed, the process of formatting and adding the new subjects, updating existing subjects, and assessing any reclassification needs can begin. The authors are exploring methods to undergo some of that work with batch processing methods, although some will likely need to be completed by hand. Any materials that are determined to need reclassification will also need to be pulled from the shelves, marked with the new call numbers, and reshelved. Throughout this process, the authors intend to diligently document all the processes for internal record and to share with others interested in doing similar projects.

Reflecting on this project-in-progress, there are significant possibilities of recreating these processes for other areas of the catalog as needed, particularly with other theologies that are similarly complex and nuanced. Black theology (BT82.7), Postcolonial theology (BT83.593), and Feminist theology (BT83.55) stand out as subject areas of great interest to seminary students, faculty, and researchers. Each of these theologies' classifications could be expanded to reflect unique contextual needs, and subject reanalysis and remediation could be leveraged to support search and discovery more effectively. Regardless, responding to the needs of users is key.

ENDNOTES

- 1 This refers specifically to the publication of works identified as Hispanic American Theology.

Discard to Discovery

Empowering Majority World Theological Libraries Through Book Donations

Hannie Riley, Librarian, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford

ABSTRACT: In an era when information is paramount, ensuring equitable access to knowledge remains a critical challenge as information divides persist and even widen across many regions of the world. As a librarian in a theological library and of Korean descent, I recognise the profound importance of theological resources and their transformative power. Historical evidence shows that theology books and the Bible significantly influenced the history of Christianity in Korea even before the arrival of missionaries. Given the remarkable impact of these resources, it is essential to establish connections between surplus theological books in the UK and the libraries of rapidly growing theological training centres and educational institutions in the majority world, which are in desperate need of such materials. To address this need, the Oxford Theology Resources Link was founded in late 2023 to deliver surplus theological books from the West to the Global South. This article explores the rationale behind it and outlines the initiative's foundational principles: providing high-quality academic resources, empowering recipients to choose their own books, and offering ongoing support for the sustainability of the receiving libraries.

INTRODUCTION

In an era when information is paramount, ensuring equitable access to information and knowledge remains a significant challenge as information divides persist and even widen across many parts of the world. Through various channels, my roles as the college librarian at Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford, chair of ABTAPL (Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries) and vice-president of BETH (Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie - European Theological Library Association), have provided numerous opportunities to understand diverse situations of theological libraries globally and the unique environments in which they operate.

From many conversations with theological librarians over the past few years, I have learned that we all face difficulties and struggles in our rapid ever-changing world, influenced by technology innovation, political instability and the demographic shifts in Christianity from the Global North to the Global South (i.e., Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania). According to Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing, “world Christianity changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century with the continued shift of adherents from the Global North to the Global South” (Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing 2020, 13).

In the West, this shift is compounded by the declining popularity of theology as a discipline and research subject, alongside waning public interest in Christianity. These trends place additional pressure on the existence of theological libraries, leading to surplus theological collections due to library closures, mergers, space limitations, downsizing, updating or weeding.

Conversely, “the decline of Christianity in the Global North is now being outpaced by the rise of Christianity in the Global South” (Zurlo, Johnson and Crossing 2020, 9). Consequently, many majority world theological libraries face a very different challenge: a lack of resources to cope with a rapid expansion of theological education and ministerial training.

Recognising the global imbalance in access to resources and information, I felt compelled to act. To address this issue from my perspective, I decided to start with *why?*—a framework introduced by Simon Sinek in his book, *Start with Why*. In this book, Sinek introduces the Golden Circle, which consists of three layers: why, how and what. The inner circle is *why*, the middle centre is *how*, and finally the outer circle is *what* (Sinek 2009, 37). According to him, this circle “provides compelling evidence of how much more we can achieve, if we remind ourselves to start everything we do by first asking why” (2009, 38).

Thus, I began by asking myself why I wanted to undertake this initiative, followed by how I would implement it, and finally what actions I would take. This article will explore each country’s trends and situations to elucidate my *why* and outline the steps taken to address the disparities in theological resource distribution.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

Starting on home ground, theological libraries in the UK have been closing or merging. I am often the first one to hear this news as I am the chair of the British Association, ABTAPL. Many theological libraries are struggling with financial constraints and merging with humanities institutions due to the unpopularity of theology as a discipline and a decline in the number of students (Press Office 2019). This trend is not only limited to institutions, but also wider society. Church attendance has declined from 11.8% to 5% of the population for the period from 1980 to 2015 (Faith Survey n.d.). Many physical collections of theology resources are discarded or stored away off-site, with more preference for e-resources. For example, institutions such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS n.d.), University College London (UCL n.d.) and the Bodleian (Bodleian Libraries 2019) have adopted an “electronic first” policy. However, centuries of theological scholarship, research heritage and academic excellence in theology and Biblical studies cannot be overlooked.

UKRAINE

In the autumn of 2023, I met the librarian from the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary at the BETH conference in Córdoba and heard his desperate appeal. He shared the following story with me. Despite the war, the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary had the highest number of graduations (190 in 2023) in their 20-year history. Teaching and learning are still going strong. However, due to devastation and destruction, many collections are destroyed and ruined. No funds are available to invest in collection acquisition. English language books in theology and Biblical studies are greatly welcomed (pers. comm., September 2023).

SOUTH SUDAN: BETHEL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bethel Theological Seminary, founded in 2018 by the Rev. Dr. Enoch Song, is currently a small but resilient institution with about 50 students. Rev. Song serves as the pastor of a small Korean church in Brighton, UK, ministering to the local Korean community, which comprises mostly students and has a congregation of about ten

members. Despite his responsibilities in the UK, Rev. Song has a deep commitment to Africa and has been actively engaged in African ministry.

When Rev. Song learned the news about South Sudan's independence during a visit to Kenya, where he was collaborating with local missionaries on campus evangelism outreach, he was moved by South Sudan's crucial geopolitical significance in relation to Islamic Sudan. This prompted him to relocate his ministry from Kenya to South Sudan (pers. comm., April 2024).

South Sudan already has many faithful local church pastors. However, they often receive relatively short-term theological education and training before being immediately deployed to serve their congregations. Recognising the need for more specialised and systematic education and training, Rev. Song, along with many Korean pastors serving Korean churches in the UK—many of whom have obtained doctoral degrees in theology from Western institutions—collaborated to provide high-quality lectures at Bethel Theological Seminary. They visit three times a year for about two weeks each time. Rev. Song visited Wycliffe Hall and collected 322 books on practical ministry in April and 259 in July 2024, which he plans to take to South Sudan in August (pers. comm. July 2024).

UGANDA: KUMI UNIVERSITY

I learned about Kumi University through a connection at KTLA (the South Korean Theology University and Seminary Library Association). Kumi University is located in the east of Uganda and was founded by a Korean missionary couple in 1996 in one of the poorest districts of the country. The university now has 500 undergraduate students across four departments including Theology. The library is ill-equipped with books, making it imperative to acquire good quality resources. English language books in theology and biblical studies, as well as Bible commentaries, are extremely expensive and so desperately needed (pers. comm., April 2024).

MYANMAR: EMMANUEL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Emmanuel Theological College is an Anglican seminary in Kalaymyo, which reopened in 2022 under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. David Brang Than, who earned his PhD at Sungkonghoe University, an Anglican University in Seoul, South Korea. After completing his education, he returned to Myanmar to minister to his people in a region where local conflicts persist. Currently he has 13 students, with 15 expected in the new academic year. Rev. Than aims to equip the library with 8,000 books. Although classes are taught in their local language, academic texts are often not yet written or translated in the local languages, making English-language theology books essentials.

SOUTH KOREA: KTLA

KTLA (Korean Theological University and Seminary Library Association) celebrated their fiftieth anniversary in 2023. I had the privilege of attending this celebratory event last summer, where I was particularly moved by one presentation. KTLA has been sending their library members to theological libraries in the majority world for one to two weeks each summer to set up libraries or update their systems and collections, all personally funded. During these trips, the Korean librarians work tirelessly from early in the morning to late evening, taking only a couple of days off before flying back (pers. comm., June 2023). In South Korea, where summer holidays are typically very short—often just one to two weeks per year—KTLA views this initiative as their missional calling. They have been running this program since 2015, with a pause only during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their dedication and sacrifice greatly humbled me.

The reason for their dedication might be rooted in the unique history of Christianity in Korea and the significant impact theological books have had. The history of Christianity in Korea is unusual, as books, particularly theology books and the Bible, played an important role even before the arrival of missionaries, preparing the way.

Rausch and Park discussed the crucial role that theological books and the Bible played in Korea before missionaries arrived. Rausch and Park state, “Koreans were first introduced to Catholicism in the early seventeenth century through books on ‘Western learning’”

acquired by a Korean diplomat during his visit to China. “When a Chinese missionary named James Zhou Wenmo . . . arrived in Korea in late 1794, there were already several thousand Catholics there” (Rausch and Park 2020, 12). Therefore, remarkably the first church in Korea was founded not by foreign missionaries but by Koreans who independently studied theology books and the Bible (Kim and Ko 2018). This fact is echoed by Allen Clark (1986, 39–40).

A similar scenario unfolded with the inception of Korea’s Protestantism. Robert Thomas, a Welsh missionary, handed over some copies of a Chinese New Testament to Korean passersby just before his execution in 1866 on the shore of Pyeongyang, without an opportunity to engage in preaching or evangelism. This act planted the initial seed of the exploration of Protestantism in Korea. The distribution of this Bible led to the conversion of some individuals (Clark 1986, 62–63). Further, as Rausch and Park note:

While there were attempts by Protestant missionaries to enter Korea in 1832 and 1866, sustained contact and conversion would not occur until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Koreans abroad in Manchuria came into contact with Protestantism through Scottish missionaries, such as John Ross, and smuggled Ross’ Korean translations of the Gospels and then the entire New Testament into Korea before the first resident missionary, Methodist Horace Allen, arrived in 1884 (Rausch and Park 2020, 13).

The theology books and Bible were truly prepared well in advance of missionaries arriving on the Korean peninsula. Presently, South Korea stands firmly rooted in Christianity, exemplifying its robust foundation by emerging as the second-largest sender of missionaries globally (Moll 2006). South Korea is approximately 99 times smaller than the US in area, and the population of the US is six times larger than South Korea. Considering this population size, South Korea sends out the most missionaries per capita. This stands as a testament to the profound impact of the Gospel and the Word.

These stories are my *why*. With my *why* established, I now have my *how*.

HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP

In the spring of 2023, a casual conversation over lunch with a visiting academic who heads a seminary in a majority world country

sparked an important initiative. For safety and security reasons, I cannot name the country or the institution. As a librarian, I inquired about their seminary library. They highlighted the inadequacy of the library in terms of academic resources, expressing challenges in procuring theological books for academic purposes in their country. Recognising librarians in the West are often overwhelmed by surplus books, I felt compelled to take action to address the disparity between those with access and those without.

Understanding the transformative influence of the Word, I felt a strong urge to connect surplus books in the UK with libraries in theological centres, seminaries, colleges, and universities in the majority world with rapid expansion, all in dire need of theological books. Through library and church networks, I began exploring ways to support libraries in need with the following questions: How do I reduce the inequality and disparity in theological resource distribution? How do I bridge the gap between those who have and those who do not? How can I meet the needs of those who are seeking advanced learning? How can I share my surplus theological resources with the majority world?

From the cases mentioned earlier, it is clear that theological libraries in the West hold a wealth of knowledge waiting to be shared. By donating surplus books, we can empower theological education in the majority world, unlocking new perspectives and strengthening global Christian communities. Theological libraries in these regions often lack critical resources, hindering the ability of students and researchers to access foundational texts. Identifying and addressing these gaps can open new avenues for learning and growth. This is where my charity, Oxford Theology Resources Link, comes into play.

WHAT TO DO: OXFORD THEOLOGY RESOURCES LINK

In addressing the core issues I have identified, the ultimate answer lies in the mission and activities of my charity, Oxford Theology Resources Link. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between surplus academic theological books in the UK and theological libraries in need within the majority world. Our goal is to ensure that every community has access to the transformative power of theological

knowledge. The Oxford Theology Resources Link operates based on three core principles.

- 1) **Providing Good Quality Academic Resources:** Ensuring that the books sent are relevant and beneficial for academic and theological education.
- 2) **Giving the Right to Choose:** Allowing the recipient libraries to select the books they need most in line with their curriculum and community.
- 3) **Ongoing Support for Sustainability:** Offering continuous support to ensure the long-term sustainability of the receiving libraries.

Through these efforts, we aim to bridge the gap and foster an environment where theological education can thrive globally, benefiting from the wealth of resources available in the West.

Empowering Access

- **Intellectual Nourishment:** Robust theological collections inspire critical thinking, theological reflection, and the exchange of ideas.
- **Educational Advancement:** Access to theological resources can elevate educational opportunities, equipping the next generation of pastors, scholars, and community leaders.
- **Contextual Relevance:** Providing culturally appropriate materials ensures the content resonates with local contexts, fostering deeper engagement and application.

Sourcing Surplus

- **Identifying Opportunity:** We reach out to academics, seminaries, and libraries to uncover theological resources no longer needed.
- **Sorting and Listing items:** Donated books are carefully sorted and listed to ensure they meet the needs of recipient libraries.
- **Coordinating Logistics:** We arrange safe, legitimate and efficient transportation of donated books to

their final destinations.

Delivery and distribution

- **Packaging:** Books are carefully packed with all relevant paperwork for smooth processing.
- **Shipping:** We collaborate with logistics partners to ensure timely and cost-effective delivery.
- **Distribution:** We work with local partners to efficiently process customs clearance, then distribute books to theological libraries in need.

Collaborative Efforts

- **Partnership:** We foster collaborative relationships with organizations, charities and individuals to amplify our impact.
- **Networking:** We connect with a global community of stakeholders to share knowledge and best practice.
- **Teamwork:** We leverage diverse skills and resources of volunteers to streamline the donation and distribution process.

Contextual Relevance

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** We are not dumping the books we no longer need. Where possible, we first send a list of available books then let the recipient library choose what they want to receive.
- **Topical Alignment:** When direct selection is not possible, we consult with professional theological librarians in the UK to curate books to meet the needs of the recipient communities, maximizing accessibility and understanding.
- **Ongoing Support:** We maintain open communication with recipients to continuously improve the relevance and impact of the donated resources. Additionally, we offer ongoing training for library staff and volunteers to empower the local workforce.

CONCLUSION

In an era of profound global disparity, the need to bridge the gap between surplus theological resources in the West and the pressing needs of libraries in the majority world has never been more critical. The Oxford Theology Resources Link seeks to address this imbalance by facilitating the transfer of valuable theological texts to regions where they are in urgent demand.

Our mission is driven by a recognition of the transformative power of theological education. By ensuring that high-quality academic resources reach those who need them, we aim to empower theological institutions in the majority world, fostering intellectual nourishment, educational advancement, and contextual relevance. Through a structured approach—ranging from sourcing surplus materials and managing logistics to fostering collaborative efforts and ensuring contextual sensitivity—our initiative is designed to maximise the impact of every book donated.

The process of bridging this resource gap involves not just the physical act of transferring books but also a commitment to understanding and addressing the specific needs of recipient libraries. By working closely with local partners and maintaining open lines of communication, we ensure that the donated resources are both relevant and effectively utilized.

The challenges are significant, but the potential for positive impact is immense. The Oxford Theology Resources Link stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and the profound difference that dedicated effort can make in enhancing global theological education. As we continue to build and refine our approach, we remain committed to the goal of creating a more equitable distribution of theological knowledge, thereby strengthening Christian communities and advancing scholarly engagement across the globe.

In conclusion, the work of Oxford Theology Resources Link not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters long-term growth and sustainability in theological education worldwide. By connecting surplus resources with those in need, we contribute to a more informed, educated, and spiritually-enriched global community.

If you are interested in this cause and want to learn more about Oxford Theology Resources Link, please visit our website at <https://oxfordtheologyresourceslink.web.ox.ac.uk>.

LINKS TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED

Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL): <https://abtapl.org.uk>

European Theological Library Association (BETH): <https://beth.eu>

Kumi University: <https://kumiuniversity.ac.ug>

South Korean Theology University and Seminary Library Association (KTLA): <https://ktla.or.kr>

Sungkonghoe University (Anglican University in Seoul, South Korea): <https://skhu.ac.kr>

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Documenting the Information Needs of Students and Faculty for ATS Standards Using Student Bibliographic Analysis

Ed Hughes, Director of Library Services, Memphis Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: The question asked in this paper was whether student bibliographies can be used to assess the usage of a library's collection and thus answer the ATS standard of documenting information needs. The goal was to analyze ten percent of student bibliographies submitted in papers during the past four semesters. This analysis showed that 88% of the citations in this sample could also be found in our two database vendors, the Digital Theological Library (80%) and EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection (46.4%). Additionally, vendor-supplied statistics did not always parallel student citations.

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) Standard 6.5 calls for "Documenting that the information needs of the school's students and faculty are met in ways that are appropriate to the school's educational mission, degree programs, and educational modalities" (ATS 2020, 10). Because the Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS) Library is entirely digital, circulation statistics for print books are no longer available. Therefore, we have relied on vendor reports from our two major database suppliers, the Digital Theological Library and EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection to supply the equivalent of circulation statistics. However, only one of our databases, EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, can provide title-level statistics, and our collection of EBCO ebook titles is much smaller than the Digital Theological Library.

Authors of a previous study noted that their project was time consuming: they reviewed 78 student research papers, yielding 441 bibliographic citations for the purpose of determining quality (Heller-Ross 2003). This project was also time-consuming. However,

the primary purpose was not to determine quality, although that was a factor. Instead, this study sought evidence that students used our databases, particularly the Digital Theological Library. This study was limited to the past four semesters in the academic years 2023 and 2024 and covered 127 citations and 21 student research papers.

To retrieve title-level statistics for the Digital Theological Library, the primary challenge was to match our database title holdings with what was found in the student bibliographies. This examination of student bibliographies found a high level of correspondence (80%) between the titles cited in the papers and the titles found in the Digital Theological Library. Combined with the matches found in EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, the resulting coverage was 88.1%. By itself, EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection matched 46.4% of the citations. Only 33% of the citations were found in both databases. Even fewer were not found in either database, 11.8%.

Although the student bibliographies showed that most of the resources they cited could be found in our two largest databases, a study of these citations could not unequivocally show that the students used our databases for all of their citations.

A similar statistical uncertainty would also be true for print books checked out versus print books cited in student papers. A print title found in the local public library would look the same as a print title from a seminary library when cited in a student bibliography. Seminary circulation statistics for that title might show heavy use, but it cannot link the student's use unequivocally with the copy of the title found in the seminary. Thus, when matched, the association between titles found in our databases and those found in student papers is an inference.

The conclusions in this study are based on the following: First, if a citation appears in the paper, it meets the student's information needs. Second, if it is posted in Canvas, it likely meets the professor's expectations. Last, if the citation also appears as a resource in the databases owned by the MTS Library, it is an instance of the library fulfilling the students' and faculty's informational needs.

Scrutinizing student bibliographies removes the uncertainty that is associated with vendor reports. EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection usage reports of ebook titles do not equate one-for-one

with citations found in student papers. While students do cite the highest-accessed ebooks in the Religion Collection, student citation counts can be much lower.

For example, the third edition of Newsom's *Women's Bible Commentary*, which is not in the Digital Theological Library, was accessed 16 times in EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection during the semesters studied, but it was only cited twice in the papers examined. Myers and Enns' 2009 *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*, found only in EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, was accessed 20 times but only cited twice in student papers. Lastly, Rasell's 2022 title, *Way of Abundance, Economic Justice in Scripture and Society*, found only in EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, was accessed 29 times but only cited twice.

As might be expected, both the Digital Theological Library and EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection reported an increase in ebook usage once MTS book stacks were closed.

For the Digital Theological Library, ebook download statistics increased nearly threefold in the studied period, from an average of 150 to nearly 400 per month. Evenly distributed across all our approximately 200 students, that would mean two ebook downloads per month or eight ebook downloads per semester per student.

Some additional findings are worth noting.

In conversation with students, they say that they often buy the books they want. They identify a book from our databases as a promising resource by downloading it and browsing its contents, like the preview option for some books in a Google search. If they like it, they buy it. A few of our students report buying all the books used for their papers even after finding them online.

This preference for paper usually comes out in a reference interview. When informed that we no longer circulate print books, they want to know if the whole ebook is downloadable. When told that it is partially downloadable, they are sometimes disappointed and say they will purchase the book.

For other seminaries considering a move to an all-online library, it is worth knowing that seminary students may have a stronger

affinity for print than other students in higher education. Based on personal observations, a comparison of marginalia and underlining in seminary library print books is much more extensive than in other types of academic libraries. Encountering these marginalia for the first time is reminiscent of encountering similar kinds of marginalia found in medieval manuscripts. For some MTS print books with several decades of usage, the exegetical student commentary constitutes a lengthy and sometimes heated dialogue. Unless students print out parts of an ebook, underlining and adding written commentary is not possible. Thus, they may prefer to purchase the book rather than be restricted to partial downloads.

A similar phenomenon occurs when digital chapters of ebooks and articles are pushed to students struggling with doing their research. These forwarded resources may seem especially relevant, but they are often missing when examining the student's final paper.

With fluctuating enrollments, tracking simple download reports from vendors may not be useful. However, tracking average downloads per student could be a good statistic for documenting that information needs are being met, especially if compared with other seminary libraries.

EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection reports are reliable documentation of browsing behavior by themselves, something the profession has long sought by posting "do not shelve" signs in the stacks. Even the Digital Theological Library's count of total downloads gives a limited picture of student browsing activity. However, examining student bibliographies is better still. They are a record of what the students found useful after all the browsing and downloading was done.

There are additional reasons for examining student bibliographies.

This last semester, for instance, we saw a sudden increase in the use of peer-reviewed articles in master's-level student papers. This appears to be the result of the Google Chrome "Angular 15" error at the end of the semester that prevented students from using the Digital Theological Library in either Chrome or Microsoft Edge. That this simple error would have that impact was surprising. The explanation is that the other database available to students at MTS is EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, and our collection of ebooks

in the Religion Collection is small. So, when students could not find any eBooks in the Digital Theological Library and too few eBooks in EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection, they looked at Atla Religion Database with AtlaSerials PLUS and found many relevant articles. Consequently, that semester, citations for peer-reviewed articles became more abundant in student papers.

An examination of student bibliographies also shows student collaboration. This is most evident when several student papers for the same class include several or all the same bibliographic citations. It also suggests that buying additional copies might be advisable if multiple students use one digital copy.

Opportunities for education about citing were also evident. Whether or not they should take the form of individual tutoring sessions is open for discussion.

If the student finds the resource from another location, this might mean that the seminary library should buy the title. Four ebook titles not owned at the time this study was completed were purchased as a result of student citations.

Examining student papers also provides an opportunity to evaluate databases. In our case, students still use EBSCO's eBook Religion Collection even though it contains few ebooks. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they use the Religion Collection in part because they are more familiar with it. In this sample, however, students also found journal articles in Atla Religion Database with AtlaSerials PLUS that cannot be found in the Digital Theological Library.

This study also showed that students are still using Google searches. This is evident in the number of open access sources used in their papers that were also not in our databases. Although only three such open access sources were used, they were peer-reviewed and current.

For other librarians interested in pursuing this kind of analysis, looking at just one class will give a better idea of what is happening or not happening in the classroom. For instance, at least one student in this sample shows evidence of avoiding digital resources. The temptation is to ignore this kind of paper and pick the best papers from the class because the quality of the citations is easier to match in the database. However, this is a disservice to struggling students.

They are more likely to come to us for help than the accomplished students, and when they do, it would be good to have some foreknowledge of their abilities.

A hazard of tracking individual titles cited in papers or as part of a download report from a vendor is the “hidden citations” that we know are there but do not appear in our statistics gathering (Meng 2024). As an example, in biblical studies, the most cited book should be some version of the Bible. However, students often use their own Bibles rather than those provided by their seminary, with the consequence that the most cited book is generally not provided by seminaries and will not show up in our statistics. In a similar vein, St. Augustine of Hippo is often not cited in papers that refer to the concept of original sin. Many other titles could be mentioned, but the point is that title-level statistics will only give a partial view of the information needs of students and faculty.

If used long term as a method for documentation, citation analysis sample size must be predetermined and adhered to. The sample in this study, 127 citations and 21 papers, represents about 20% of the papers generated by students and 10% of our student population for the period studied. This may or may not be a sufficient sample size to meet the criteria in the ATS Standard.

Lastly, students are using artificial intelligence to write their papers. A few student papers showed evidence of AI generation and were consequently not used for this study. What is important is that none of these AI-generated citations can be verified. Shabby citations in student papers may turn out to be one of the indicators of AI usage.

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Including Library Principles in Licenses

Legal Language Without a Legal Degree

Christina Torbert, Head of Continuing Resources and Acquisitions, University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT: Libraries should be amending the licenses received from vendors for electronic resources to reflect library principles. The *ASERL Eleven* list of licensing principles seeks to provide rationale and example language for 11 important library values. These statements and samples of legal language are discussed. This list is just one of many resources that librarians can use to negotiate better and more helpful terms in agreements, and further sources are given.

INTRODUCTION: WHY THIS PRESENTATION?

I first learned that libraries can edit the licenses presented by vendors at an Atla workshop nearly 20 years ago, taught by the incomparable Kevin Smith. It was a revelation that libraries should ask—no, demand—changes to licenses, to be sure the library was getting the terms that best fit their situation. Early on, I physically redlined and wrote in the terms we wanted or needed. I work for a state-supported university; they have some very specific requirements. When vendors began refusing some of the changes, I met with someone in the General Counsels' Office who advised me to do the best I could and calculate the risks the library was willing to accept. This was back in the early days when the library signed all the library-related licenses; those times are past. Later, the university began requiring a Mandatory Addendum be attached to all licenses, but no one was really checking if the vendor was agreeing to those terms. Now, all University licenses and contracts are signed by one Vice President, and vendors that do not accept the Mandatory Addendum do not get our business.

But all these legal maneuvers by the University and General Counsel have to do with specific business practices, warranties and

liabilities, and not really with the terms of use specific to library resources. Librarians should be looking out for the terms that preserve and even expand the long-standing values we believe in: broad fair use, access to sharing and new research methods, user privacy, and transparency about costs. Many different entities, very large libraries and their consortia, have been working on these terms and sharing them for a decade or more. NISO published SERU, a basic, bare-bones license template, in 2015, with the hope that it could act as an open model that vendors and libraries could agree on without any negotiation. California Digital Library and the Big Ten Alliance have extensive websites explaining the values libraries should be advocating for in their licenses of electronic resources. The Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN/RCDR) also has a very helpful website.

WHY THIS LIST OF LIBRARY PRINCIPLES?

Our library at the University of Mississippi is a member of ASERL (Association of Southeastern Research Libraries), and I served on the drafting team for the *ASERL Eleven*, a list of principles for amending licenses received from vendors for electronic resources (ASERL 2022). The drafting team talked for a long time about why we wanted to create another licensing guide, and we narrowed it down to two primary reasons. We wanted to make clear that the changes we were asking for to our licenses were not arbitrary; they were connected to library values. And we wanted to give specific examples for acceptable language to support those values. The drafting team included very experienced licensing librarians, with at least one lawyer evaluating the statements and suggested language. We wanted small libraries without those resources or colleagues to be able to request firm, quality language from their vendors.

HOW DID WE BUILD THIS LIST?

The task force started with the principles. The group brainstormed the common, important, long-standing values of librarianship, grouped principles together, and considered which ones were still missing. We tried to get the list down to the top ten, but we had to compromise at eleven. Then we mined all the great resources created by other

libraries and consortia to find examples of statements and licensing language already existing. We borrowed, mixed and matched, and edited to represent what we thought were contemporary and vital statements of values. Our value statements use terms like “ASERL seeks to,” “ASERL believes,” and “ASERL affirms.” We tried very hard to put our values into positive statements, explaining why each principle was important to our mission as libraries. In the end, we alphabetized the principles, not imposing a hierarchy on the relative importance of each principle.

WHAT BASICS ARE ASSUMED IN THE ASERL ELEVEN?

First, the group assumed that each library would know and work within their own state’s or institution’s requirements for contracts. I mentioned that Mississippi has a Mandatory Addendum to all University Contracts. Most of the points of that Addendum do not apply to library resources, but I am required to attach it anyway. It outlines the relevant state laws and university policies that the library and the vendor must follow.

The *ASERL Eleven* does not tackle *liability or warranty* language. Libraries should not be liable for the actions of their patrons, but they should take reasonable actions to ensure sure patrons understand proper use of resources. Our library is not allowed to make any warranties.

The *ASERL Eleven* does not include language about *authentication methods or who qualifies as users*. Each library should make these terms match the technology and policy of their institution.

The task force did not address *governing law or dispute resolution*. These are details where each library should follow the requirements of their state or institution. For example, my state requires that all agreements be governed by the laws of Mississippi and that all methods of dispute resolution be available. For most vendors, changing these two points is not a problem, but occasionally the vendor will add language about who pays the costs of adjudicating disputes in a location that isn’t their preference. Alternatively, the license can be silent on these matters, leaving them to be negotiated if there is a question later.

The last point not on the values list is *mutual agreement to changes*. I highly recommend including language requiring mutually signed addenda for any changes to the terms of the agreement. This point can be difficult for “clickthrough” licenses, or when the library is agreeing to terms of use posted on a website. If you cannot get signed agreement to the terms, you can ask that notice be given of any substantial changes before they come into effect.

WHAT IS COVERED IN THE ASERL ELEVEN?

1. Accessibility

ASERL seeks to ensure equitable access to information as a core ethical commitment, as well as a legal obligation.

The Library Accessibility Alliance (LAA) had already done great work on model accessibility language, and the ASERL task force didn’t think we could improve it. The model language includes examples for both US ADA-compliance and language that is more appropriate for non-US institutions. Both versions include provisions for libraries to adapt non-compliant resources to the needs of the patron. The LAA website is provided in the guidelines (ASERL 2022, 4).

2. Author Rights Retention

ASERL seeks to protect the rights of authors. Content licenses should make clear that vendors will not require affiliated authors to waive licensing or deposit policies, mandates associated with institutional policy, funder policy, or other sources.

All of us in the ASERL task force could cite examples of researchers not realizing that they could also change the author agreements presented by publishers and that they, the authors, did not have to sign away their self-archiving and depository rights. Including language about author rights tries to preserve the right of researchers to be able to use the institution’s repository, if there is one, now and in the future.

3. Confidentiality and Non-disclosure Statements

ASERL believes libraries should have the right to share pricing and contract information with interested parties to promote transparency and collaboration.

One of the dirty secrets of electronic resource licensing is that every library pays a different amount, depending on multiple factors: historic pricing, quantity of content purchased or subscribed, and ability of the librarian to negotiate in convincing business terms. Vendors and publishers may intend non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to keep competitors from learning about their business practices, but the NDAs also keep a very collaborative profession from sharing information about pricing and favorable terms of use with each other. Librarians should ask to have these provisions removed—but fair warning, I've had fifty-fifty success with getting them removed. The University's contract office was only concerned that the provision allowed the transparency required by state law, and so far they have not backed up the library's concerns about this matter.

4. Content Retention / Post-Termination Access

ASERL believes libraries must provide consistent, reliable access to resources for faculty and students to support their scholarly and research activities over the long term. Content licenses should provide perpetual access rights to licensed content wherever possible. If hosting fees are required, these amounts should be strictly defined and limited as much as possible.

This point is becoming less of an issue, especially for electronic journals, and it is another instance where the task force found model language in the LibLicense model agreement that said all we wanted.

Libraries should ask about post-termination access (PTA) for every new resource; it isn't always available, depending on the type of resource. Be sure you understand how PTA is provided: hosted on the vendor site or delivered in an alternate format for the library to host locally. If the vendor is hosting the content, be sure you understand what, if any, ongoing fees are required for that hosting. If several different resources are hosted on the same platform, ask for a cap on all the fees: not over a certain dollar amount per year, or not over a specific dollar amount total over all years.

5. Digital Rights Management

ASERL believes Digital Rights Management (DRM) makes licensed resources less useful for library users, limiting their lawful scholarly activities by controlling when, where, and how they can consult licensed resources. Content licenses should forgo DRM restrictions in favor of usability, regardless of the platform through which content is provided.

DRM refers to the restrictions vendors put on how and how much electronic content can be used: pages downloaded or printed, ability to post via pdf, ability to share with colleagues or other libraries, how many authorized users can access the content simultaneously, etc. All these restrictions make the library's electronic collections less user-friendly and more confusing. At a panel presentation at Atla Annual last year, we heard various publishers say the different platforms control DRM. The platforms and (usually book) vendors claim that the publishers make those decisions. One method for addressing this issue is to prefer purchasing ebooks and content from publishers and platforms that provide DRM-free content.

The next two points (alphabetically) have become pretty standard for electronic resources licenses; there isn't much debate about these practices being allowed. The ASERL task force still felt it was important to reiterate the overarching library principle: Fair use protects the reasonable use of content, even if the library does not "sign" a license, and contracts should never reduce fair use.

6. E-reserves/Course packets

ASERL affirms the principle of fair use which protects the use of reasonable amounts of content in e-reserves and course packs, even absent a license. Fair use rights should be enhanced, not reduced, when libraries pay for access.

The suggested language does not limit the format of the content available to be compiled in the e-reserves or course packs.

7. Interlibrary Loan

ASERL affirms that interlibrary loan (ILL) is a core library function, which ensures that library users who occasionally need resources

held at other libraries can request these resources through their home institutions. Content licenses should permit ILL to the full extent permitted by US copyright law. Content licenses should not include numerical limits on ILL.

The example language for ILL also removes restrictions on *how* ILL is fulfilled. Libraries should be able to use whatever technology is available to them to fulfill legal requests, without worrying about use restrictions from the license. The other principle supported in this language is keeping vendors from adding restrictions to content that was intentionally published without restrictions via OA or Creative Commons. The language also includes formats that are difficult to share: data, audio/video, electronic archives. The task force wanted to keep the option open for when sharing of these formats is technologically possible.

The next two principles are linked to each other and to other principles. Example language isn't provided for either principle, but the task force wanted to express the values inherent in them.

8. Price and Cost Transparency

As with the NDA principle, ASERL believes libraries need meaningful information about vendor products and prices to make well-informed decisions. Vendors should provide prices in simple, clear terms that enable comparison across products, across vendors, and across institutions.

Libraries need to control costs. While avoiding non-disclosure clauses is an important step, so are clear, understandable, transparent pricing structures and subscription alternatives. When vendors present complicated packages with varied pricing, it is difficult for libraries to compare products across different vendors, but also sometimes for similar products from the same vendor.

9. Support for Open Access

ASERL seeks agreements that promote open access (OA) to research in ways consistent with these broader licensing principles. Libraries should resist the inequities and dysfunctions associated with subscriptions.

The taskforce did not want to specify which models for OA were acceptable, but we did want to frame agreements that include OA within the broader values. We believe that libraries should be supportive of OA, but librarians should not accept just any method of providing OA. These principles were written just as the trend for Transformative Agreements (TAs) was taking off, and even then some libraries and consortia were beginning to question the wisdom of libraries blindly funding APCs (article processing charges), without any requirements on the vendor side to explain how much APCs cost and how those costs are set. TAs have the potential to replicate the publishing inequities of subscriptions.

10. Text and Data Mining

ASERL affirms that fair use protects text and data mining (TDM). The right to read also includes the right to perform computational analysis. Content licenses should provide support for computational uses of licensed content, without unreasonable restrictions.

The mantra in the task force for this principle was “TDM is Fair Use.” Full stop. The suggested language does recognize that some TDM projects will need specially-prepared data sets, and vendors should be allowed to recover the costs of preparing that data. But the form of the data should be controlled by the user, not by the vendor.

Finally, the longest suggested language paragraph.

11. User Privacy and Data Security

ASERL affirms that library user data should only be used to enable the provision of licensed content and services. Any sharing of user data should require prior notice and user consent. Vendors should be barred from using data about library users’ research activities as part of surveillance products.

Library users should not be required to register and create personal accounts in order to use resources the library provides, and if users do choose to create personalized accounts, the vendors should not be reselling personal information, including use patterns of specific users. There are instances when the government can subpoena usage information from vendors, but vendors should not be selling or providing wholesale search and use data to other

parties. The list was written in the context of the 2021 reports about LexisNexis and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and we recognized the abuse possible of our users' search patterns being resold to other agencies.

WHAT ALREADY NEEDS UPDATING?

These principles were written and edited in 2021, for release in 2022. Two years later, the principles still apply, but the situations for application have already expanded. I have already mentioned Transformative Agreements as part of the support of Open Access. The task force considered making a statement about TAs and how to make them support library values, but we decided the principle was broad enough for each library to make their own policies and decisions about which models of supporting OA works for their situation. I would encourage libraries to outline for themselves what values they want to see supported in their agreements around OA and evaluate each offer or model against those values.

The other elephant challenging the licenses for electronic resources is Artificial Intelligence (AI). As we can tell from the presentations at this year's Atla Annual, AI is expanding even faster than TDM was five years ago, and while the two are related, I have seen at least one vendor taking preemptory action to exclude use of AI tools on their content. Granted, it was a major international science publisher who was already developing their own AI tool and clearly wanted to disable potential competitors using their product to build competing tools. The International Coalition of Library Consortia has produced a thorough statement about AI and electronic resource licenses, but for sample language, our state-side group looked to the language publicly posted by CRKN:

... Authorized Users may not use the Subscribed Products in combination with an artificial intelligence tool to:

- (i) Create a competing commercial product or service for use by third parties;
- (ii) Adversely disrupt the functionality of the Subscribed Products; or
- (iii) Reproduce or redistribute the Subscribed Products to third party artificial intelligence tools, except to the extent limited portions of the Subscribed Products are used for research purposes (including to train an algorithm) in

a closed or self-hosted environment solely for use by the Authorized Users, to ensure such use does not train the algorithm of a third party artificial intelligence tool (other than for the creation of prompts or queries) and does not result in the third party provider of such artificial intelligence tools retaining any residual portions of the Subscribed Products.

... Authorized Users may only use artificial intelligence tools as permitted in this Agreement in combination with the Subscribed Products if such artificial intelligence tools incorporate reasonable security.

[The Vendor] and the Subscriber both acknowledge the unique challenges and complexities around the emerging artificial intelligence technologies and LLMs and agree to mutually support each other in developing policies and protocols for both parties' benefit. If there are existing, or if during the term of this Agreement the government adopts mandatory laws regarding artificial intelligence in research, such law shall prevail to the extent of any inconsistency with this Agreement. (Canadian Research Knowledge Network, 2024, 2–3).

There are a few parts of this language I particularly like. It protects various uses of AI (training an algorithm and creating prompts) for research while protecting the functionality of the product; and it provides protection for the vendor as well as for the researcher. This second set of paragraphs also limits the enforcement of these AI provisions to “reasonable security”, requiring researchers to be aware of how the products are interacting with AI, but not requiring special programs to protect the data. And they keep the dialog around use of AI open for further adaptation. Time will tell if this language is broadly acceptable in the electronic resources marketplace.

WHERE ELSE TO SEEK EXAMPLES OF STRONG LICENSING LANGUAGE?

Here is a short list of helpful websites and groups that provide examples and statements around library values in licensing language.

- California Digital Library Standard License: <https://cdlib.org/services/collections/licensed/toolkit/>
- Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN/RCDR): <https://www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/model-license>
- NorthEast Research Libraries Consortium (NERL): https://nerl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NERLModelLicense-61019_a.pdf
- LibLicense Model License Agreement (2014):

<https://liblicense.crl.edu/licensing-information/model-license/>

The *ASERL Eleven* document has a longer list of resources that we looked at during our work. ASERL also has a License Review Team, volunteers that will read through licenses for other libraries and make recommendations about changes that should be requested. The LibLicense listserv is another resource where knowledgeable and experienced librarians will answer questions about licensing terms. Librarianship is a collaborative profession; if you have questions or concerns about any terms vendors are presenting, there are multiple places to reach out for help.

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Jérémie LeBlanc, Atla Board Member (President, 2023–2024)

Karl Stutzman, Atla Board Vice President (2024–2025)

ABSTRACT: The Atla Board of Directors is responsible for guiding the strategic direction of Atla and ensuring that it meets the needs of its members. Rather than transcribing what was a largely informal question-and-answer and listening session, this article highlights the primary concerns, structural processes, and relationship-building efforts that characterize the Board’s governance model. The session provided insights into the Board’s composition, the concerns of both Board members and the general membership, and the Board’s engagement strategies to strengthen relationships and ensure effective governance. The session also offered an opportunity for Board members to gather feedback from constituent members, known as the “moral owners.”

Editorial note: *The authors utilized ChatGPT as a tool to summarize themes within the session transcript.*

INTRODUCTION

The Atla Board of Directors uses a form of governance known as Policy Governance, which was developed in the 1970s by John Carver and taught by his spouse Miriam Carver (Carver and Carver 2016a; Carver and Carver 2016b). This governance method focuses the Board on what are known as Organizational Ends, or the results that Atla members want to see from the organization. The Organizational Ends are drawn from member feedback. Board members present engaged in a question-and-answer and listening session with Atla Annual attendees, who are important organizational stakeholders and potential future Board members.

Four Board members convened the session: Beth Kumar, Karl Stutzman, Susan Ebertz, and Jérémie LeBlanc. Kumar is Director of Library Services at Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA, USA) and is the Secretary for 2024–25. Stutzman is Director of Library Services at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, IN, USA) and is the Vice President for 2024–25. Susan Ebertz is Emerita Director of the Library at Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, IA, USA) and is the President for 2024–25. LeBlanc is Chief Librarian at Saint Paul University (Ottawa, ON, Canada) and served as President in 2023–24.

A central question presented by the Board members leading the session was whether attendees “see” themselves in Atla’s Organizational Ends, which were presented at the Annual Member Meeting on June 20, 2024 and which are available on Atla’s website (Atla “Mission & Organizational Ends,” n.d.).

COMPOSITION AND ROLES

The Atla Board of Directors, per the Bylaws of the association, has twelve members, all of whom are required to be individual members of the association and who are elected by the membership. Board members serve three-year terms and may be elected for a second consecutive term. The Board currently meets in person three times a year; one of these meetings is before Atla Annual. The Board also meets online numerous times for special meetings and committee meetings. The Board has four officers: a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Board members present explained that board service is all volunteer work and requires a high degree of focus and dedication as well as many hours of preparation and meetings. In addition to Atla’s governing bylaws, the Board operates from the *Atla Board Policy Manual*. These documents, as well as Board meeting minutes, are accessible to members via the Atla website. The Atla website also lists all Board members and includes a contact form for the Board (Atla “Board of Directors,” n.d.).

ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS

One of the primary goals of the session was to foster engagement between the Board and the general membership. The Board invited questions and feedback from both in-person and online attendees, emphasizing the importance of transparency and open communication. This initiative aligns with the Board's commitment to building a culture of trust and transparency within Atla.

What is "Moral Ownership?"

A significant portion of the session focused on the concept of *moral ownership*, a term used to describe the stakeholders who have a vested interest in Atla. It was clarified that moral owners include all members of Atla; these are the stakeholders who contribute to and benefit from the organization's mission. This distinction underscores the inclusive nature of the Board's governance model.

Relationship Building

A recurrent theme in the session was the Board's concern about relationship building. Ensuring healthy and strong relationships between Board members, Atla staff, and the general membership is a priority. This focus on relational health is seen as essential for fostering a collaborative and supportive organizational culture. The Board has engaged in learning activities related to building relationships and sees this at the heart of its work.

Understanding Board Activities

There was an expressed need for greater clarity regarding the Board's activities. Members voiced a desire to better understand the Board's decision-making processes and the specific actions it undertakes. This feedback highlights the necessity for ongoing efforts to communicate the Board's roles and responsibilities more effectively. Members present were also interested in knowing what board service means and what is involved so that they can prepare for future service to the association.

Organizational Ends (OEs)

The session also addressed the Board's Organizational Ends (OEs), which outline the key objectives and goals of Atla. Feedback from the membership indicated a general alignment with these goals, though there were calls for more ambitious and risk-taking initiatives. One OE that generated considerable discussion was OE 1.4, which emphasizes the expression of varying spiritual traditions and life stances. The inclusion of "life stances" was a response to member feedback, demonstrating the Board's responsiveness to evolving member needs. A recently instituted collaboration between the Board and Atla staff is a detailed annual survey of members. This is an attempt to systematize the gathering of feedback from moral owners on the progress Atla is making toward reaching its OEs. This survey also allows the Board to survey the landscape and identify trends in the membership.

CONCLUSION

The Atla Board's open session at the annual conference provided valuable insights into the Board's composition, concerns, and engagement strategies. The emphasis on transparency, relationship building, and member feedback reflects the Board's commitment to effective governance and organizational health. Continued efforts to embrace future-facing leadership will be crucial for Atla's ongoing success and relevance.

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Leaving the Mess

Epistemology and Ethics in Media Literacy Instruction

Chris Rosser, Librarian, Oklahoma State University

Heath Rosser, Student, Oklahoma Christian University

ABSTRACT: *Authority is constructed and contextual.* Thus spake the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy, an assertion that rightly guides information and media literacy instructors as we *form* and *inform* students, empowering them to navigate an ecosystem rife with mis- and disinformation. Yet as danah boyd famously argues in her 2018 SXSW EDU keynote, how we teach media literacy can become an “assertion of authority over epistemology” that undermines skills we intend to sharpen by not recognizing and valuing fundamental differences among how individuals within communities make sense of the world(s) we inhabit. boyd asks, “How do we teach across epistemologies?” We suggest that by leveraging narrative and play mechanics, gameful design can mitigate problems of epistemic authority, encouraging exploration and fostering desire-driven encounters with diversity in worlds both real and imagined.

MOVE 1: A PROBLEM OF EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY

The continuing rise of gamer culture offers fresh strategies for gameful design, transforming the classroom from a traditional learning environment into an interactive, playful space where a community of learners can become *learners at play*. In all the spaces where we design and deploy instruction, our students are diverse individuals from diverse cultural, geographic, and epistemic contexts, which can create interesting considerations and potential collisions to navigate. We believe that gameful design with playful, AI-enhanced instruction transforms approaches to teaching across epistemologies, fostering more inclusive, engaging, and adaptive experiences that leverage play as the mode and medium of teaching and learning. Using a gamified course, Worldbuilding, as an exemplar, this

paper aims to help readers: 1) discern the problems of epistemic authority for media literacy instruction; 2) discuss how “serious” games leverage the power of narrative and gameplay mechanics to broaden encounters with different ways of thinking; 3) consider how gameful design might also leverage the power of narrative, promoting empathy and fostering desire-driven encounters with diversity; and 4) experience how AI-enhanced instruction centers *play* as a compelling medium for teaching and learning.

We begin by contextualizing our problem with a story. Last Fall, I (Chris) was asked to teach a class on World Building, a dream course brimming with storytelling, student artwork, and buzzy creativity. I gamified the course, and because I’d been working with emerging AI tools, I determined to find a way to meaningfully incorporate AI into our semester learning. Most of the students enrolled in the course were either Gaming and Animation or Art majors; these students are incredibly talented, and the artwork they create is personal and important. Many of them have strong feelings about the ethical problems associated with AI, especially with regard to how these tools are trained on other’s art and images. As a librarian, I also am concerned about the ethics of these tools; nevertheless, I deeply value their potential to transform human work and learning and realize that if our students are not empowered to use these tools well and to leverage their potential, they’ll likely have already fallen behind others when they enter the workforce.

When I enthusiastically announced in class that I had built a GPT tool that would take all of the disparate storylines and loosely connected threads we had been developing throughout the semester and use them to generate infinite new stories sourced from our work, I didn’t receive the reaction I was anticipating. *You built an AI tool that generates infinite, original stories sourced from our work? Wow! You’re the coolest teacher ever!* That’s what I assumed they would say, but it’s not at all what happened. After I announced the tool, several students stayed after class to ensure that I was aware of the dangers of AI, especially for artists, since those voracious machines seem hellbent on gobbling up and mimicking their work. One student assured me that they had recently posted an expertly argued, 2,000-word screed on Discord which they would make available to me if interested.

Honestly, I felt confused and more than a little defensive. *You think I don't know about these concerns about AI? I begin every morning with NPR; trust me, I'm in the know. Plus, you know me; you know I'd never do anything to harm you or your work—can you just give this a chance? It will be good for you.* These are the thoughts that ran like a script in the back of my mind each time students confronted me about AI, confrontations and cautions that became more frequent as we neared the end of the semester.

For our final class session, I decided to address the ethics of AI as a partner for work and creativity. I demonstrated various portrayals of AI in media, acknowledged the problematic ethics of the moment we inhabit, but asserted that AI is here to stay, that it will be a force for good, and that instead of fearing this phantom menace we should be open-minded and learn to leverage these new, incredible tools. Then I demonstrated the awesome tool that generates new stories sourced from student-crafted prompts; but instead of cheers and applause, I ended the semester by angering several and alienating one to the extent that the student has not spoken with me since, despite my sincere efforts to reconcile.

I am not usually the teacher students decide to hate—well, I was likable enough until I insisted on praising AI to a class chockablock full of young artists. So, what happened? It's been bugging me; and I can say that for whatever students got out of our time together, that class was incredibly instructive for me. These experiences helped me understand something about what it means to teach across diverse ways of thinking and (more importantly) how to do better next time. As we think about what it means to do better, let's consider Transformative Learning Theory in light of the problems of epistemic authority.

MOVE 2: TL AND PROBLEMS OF EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY

Our thinking is informed by Transformative Learning Theory as proposed by theorist Jack Mezirow. Transformative Learning Theory refers to the “process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow 1996, 162). Since TL is focused on adjusting learners' frames of reference by helping them become

“more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow 2018, 116), it resonates with common approaches to media literacy instruction. Both TL and media literacy instruction risk the problem of epistemic authority, *de facto* instructor assertions of authority over diverse ways of thinking.

Mezirow asserts that, “Transformative learning is essentially a metacognitive process of *reassessing reasons* supporting our problematic meaning perspectives” (2018, 120). By *meaning perspectives*, Mezirow refers to the frames of thinking or habits of mind that govern expectations and assumptions. As he describes,

Frames of reference are the structures of culture and language through which we construe meaning by attributing coherence and significance to our experience. They selectively shape and delimit our perception, cognition and feelings by predisposing our intentions, beliefs, expectations and purposes. . . . Once set or programmed, we automatically move from one specific mental or behavioural activity to another, and we have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions. (116)

Frames of thinking or habits of mind are deep-seated, less visible, and often operate without our conscious awareness. This may be analogous to the coding or “rules” a computer runs in the background to keep the system operating. But our mental habits become visible when they are articulated as specific points of view or perspectives, expressions that reveal how we think about the world and that also shape or inform how we engage with others.

Since perspectives can be articulated, they come more easily into our awareness and are more open to feedback from others. In the example from world-building class, deep-seated beliefs about creativity, originality, and intellectual property are all at play in the students’ habits of mind; when confronted with AI, mental habits became expressed as an articulation of anxieties: *It’s not good or fair that AI is being trained on our artwork without our permission and that we must now fear for our jobs as artists, illustrators, and creators.* While we might share students’ beliefs about creativity, originality, and intellectual property, we might also articulate an alternative perspective, resulting in an ethical conundrum as competing assertions about *the good* collide: *These tools are training on other’s work just like you did when learning your creative craft; it’s better that we focus on the good these tools will bring instead of avoiding or refusing AI out of fear and suspicion, especially since your future careers*

will almost certainly involve AI. So, who's right? Which of our beliefs is better? Such questions may not actually be very helpful if we're interested in inspiring transformative learning.

While, as the instructor, I might assert the *authority of my perspective* over students' perspectives, transformative learning takes a different approach. Transformation happens through encounter, dialogue, and critical reflection. Instructors have power, and power pervades our classrooms, both virtual and visceral. Even instructors who are intentional about fostering democratic or open learning experiences nevertheless live, move, and have their being as power-wielders within the dynamics of pervading cultural norms. Normalized power structures are baked into classroom ethos; both students and instructors have been socialized to implicitly understand how power works in a classroom setting.

In her book *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (2023), Patricia Cranton describes power that pervades instruction as the way students can feel surveilled by peers and instructors; from a young age, students are socialized to know how to think and how to act in the classroom, so that understanding the parameters of what's appropriate or expectations about what differentiates good students from bad students already exist within as deep-seated frames of reference, re-enforced through classroom experiences year after year. So Cranton warns, "If students perceive their teacher as having position power—control that is based solely on his or her position as teacher—students will work hard to do what they think the teacher-in-power wants them to do" (85).

Assumptions about power and authority in the classroom are a function of socialization within particular cultural contexts. According to Cranton (2017),

In the development of his comprehensive theory of adult learning, Mezirow integrated two ideas: the cultural context of learning, including socialization as the foundation for early learning, and the central role of making meaning from experiences in learning. Socialization involves internalizing and personalizing the assumptions, beliefs, and values that are communicated by parents, teachers, the community, and the culture. When a person encounters perspectives that contradict that early socialization, he or she may question the currently held perspectives and revise them Transformative learning involves revising limited and distorted meaning

perspectives through reflection on assumptions that have been uncritically assimilated. (n.p.)

But as Mezirow himself puts it, the “formative learning of childhood becomes the transformative learning in adulthood” (1991, 3). Transformation happens through encounters with different perspectives that initiate a disorienting dilemma; ensuing dialogue makes perspectives visible; and critical reflection then may lead to transformed thinking and to new frames of reference. As Mezirow says, “We make a decision and then live what we have come to believe until we encounter new evidence, argument or a perspective that renders this orientation problematic and requires reassessment” (117).

Transformative learning requires us to *think about our thinking* in light of new encounters with thinking that is different from our own, to make our thinking visible by putting our perspectives into reflective discourse with others, and then to make and act on decisions informed by new frames of reference. Mezirow describes transformative learning as “a rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference, including those representing such contextual cultural factors as ideology, religion, politics, class, race, gender and others” (126).

But I don’t want to talk about religion, politics, or other controversial topics with students; I just want them to accept what I’m saying about AI; I want them to think like me. Is that so bad?

Mezirow says that transformative learning “is the process by which adults learn how to think critically for themselves rather than take assumptions supporting a point of view for granted” (126). And now we have arrived at the Gordian knot of transformative teaching. As you likely recognize, to expect students to simply accept an assertion of an authoritative perspective from an instructor inhibits their capacity to experience transformative learning—yet, my perspective as the instructor is precisely what I want them to receive and to incorporate as their own because *I think* it’s good for them to *think like me*. At least, in this case, I want them to put aside their fears and embrace AI with all the techno-optimism and enthusiasm that I experience daily.

I first started thinking about the problem of epistemic authority after teaching a gamified media literacy class entitled *Eat, Play, Love: Adventures in the Information Ecosystem*. In creating and teaching this course, I was confronted by problems of epistemology and ethics: *epistemology*, of course, involves human ways of *thinking*, how and why we make decisions about what we know to be true about the world, about ourselves, and about others; and *ethics* involves human ways of *being*, how we relate in the world to one another. Through this course, I began to recognize that epistemological and ethical considerations require us to rethink and perhaps revise how we do media literacy instruction. Eventually, my own thinking was informed by scholar danah boyd (2018a), who offers a critique of media literacy instruction as an example of “[asserting] authority over epistemology” (boyd 2018a).¹ Essentially, boyd suggests that *epistemological difference* creates challenges for media literacy instruction, since people evaluate, interpret, and make meaning from within their own individual and communal ways of knowing.²

boyd asserts, “If we’re not careful, media literacy and critical thinking will simply be deployed in the classroom as an assertion of authority over epistemology.” As librarians, we likely agree with the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* that “authority is constructed and contextual” (2016, 4). Yet just as authority is constructed and contextual, so also are evaluation and interpretation, sense-making constructs by which we determine how, why, and where we consume and create information, and who we trust for information. boyd worries that if our instruction becomes an “assertion of authority over epistemology,” we might undermine the very skills we intend to sharpen. So boyd wonders, *How do we teach across epistemologies?*

Although boyd is thinking about media literacy instruction, I realized that her warning here might have been made about my world-building course; indeed, her warning echoes in all spaces where we hope to foster transformative learning experiences. As an instructor, I have viewpoints I want my students to consider, perspectives I hope they will adopt; but transformative learning resists any claim that my perspectives as instructor are *de facto* authoritative and instead requires that I invite students to consider their own perspectives, make them visible through articulation, and then put these varied perspectives in dialogue by facilitating encounters with difference.

My instruction then aims to foster engagement, encourage reflection, offer feedback, and inspire discernment.

Teaching that actualizes transformative learning is neither easy nor simple; at least, it's different from approaches that assume the authority of the instructor's perspectives. We want our students to become skilled critical thinkers; but boyd is right to worry that our instruction can become an "assertion of authority over epistemology" if we fail to recognize and value fundamental differences among how individuals within communities make sense of the world very differently. So we wonder, *What do we as instructors do with the problem of epistemic difference in light of the transformative learning experiences we aim to facilitate and inspire?*

The transformative learning process involves critical reflection about assumptions so that we might develop or acquire a new disposition (a new schema or mental model) for making sense of experiences. Mezirow posits that transformative learning experiences happen when we encounter a disorienting dilemma. This experience of disorientation derails us. I don't mean "derails" like a train falling off the tracks; instead, it's more like a derailleur mechanism on a bicycle: we're thrown out of gear for a moment so that we might reset in a new position or, in this case, a renewed way of thinking. So the question becomes, *How? How do we design learning that makes thinking visible and fosters critical, reflective dialogue that then leads to transformative learning experiences?*

In response to these questions, we suggest that instructors can work to foster *epistemic curiosity* among playful learning communities by incorporating gameful design and even playful, AI-enhanced instruction, a move that might transform our approach to transformative learning itself. Primarily, we'd like to offer seven pedagogical pivots by which we foster more inclusive, engaging, and adaptive experiences that leverage play as the mode and medium of teaching and learning. Of course, classes on media literacy and world-building are well suited for fostering epistemic curiosity since these subjects naturally invite questions and engagement across diverse ways of knowing. While fostering curiosity is an obvious way forward, the question remains: *How do we do it?* We'd like to suggest seven pedagogical pivots that can help us start to rethink how we approach instruction that engenders transformative learning experiences.

MOVE 3: SEVEN PEDAGOGICAL PIVOTS

None of us speak from outside our own epistemology, a web of beliefs by which we make sense of the world as we encounter it. So, as we suggest pivots in our thinking about instruction, we recognize that even now we are engaging each other from within our own shared and distinct epistemologies. Nevertheless, the following seven pivots inform this work, and we offer them to you for critical consideration.

From communities of learning to communities at play. Our first pivot involves anthropology—how we think about who we and our students are as human beings. While a Cartesian response to this conundrum posits that *I think; therefore I am*, humans are also “*desiring* beings—we live and learn by our gut as much as by our head” (Rosser 2022, 183). While a conception of human beings as *Homo sapiens* privileges the mind or intellect (i.e., humans as *knowers*), our pivot reclaims the conception of humans as proposed by mid-twentieth century Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (2014), who names humans as *Homo ludens*, or people as *players*. With regard to learning, *play* is a better metaphor because it more accurately describes our relation to the information we engage, create, and consume. Play spaces are desire-driven spaces; we enter and engage most often because we *want* to be there. Play engages the whole person and not just our cognitive or intellectual capacities. We are driven into learning spaces by our guts, and we follow our guts because we are desiring beings. So, the first pedagogical pivot to make is about who humans are, shifting us from a community of learning to a *community-at-play*, a meaningful reframe that informs the second pivot.

From consumption to encounter. Our second pivot reconceptualizes engagement with information as *encounter* rather than *consumption*. Since encountered information represents and is sourced from the minds of other humans, consumers are always in dialectical and dialogical relationships, tethered to others by the information we consume (Rosser 2022). At the center of these pedagogical pivots is a conviction that “learning and love share a heart: each requires an encounter with difference, that which is not self (or sameness), someone who is other” (192). Resistance to that which is different is *natural*, a kind of gut reaction, so that when we encounter difference our inclination is to get defensive, to tell difference to go away. But if

we are unwilling to encounter and engage with difference, we find ourselves always stuck in our same-old ways, perpetually submerged in sameness. There is no growth without encounter, so “it is crucial that we encounter ideas and learning that are different from our normed and conditioned expectations—we need encounter with ideas that may trigger visceral reaction” (Rosser 2022, 192), a gut-punch reaction signaling a gap between *self* and an *other*. And when we feel the gap, we might kick it away, or we might do differently: we might assume a humble learner’s posture, and with head bowed make the good confession, *I don’t understand, but I’m willing to try*. Such a posture is engendered through encounter, not consumption.

From certainty to curiosity. Here we’re thinking about the instructor as an *authority* and the instructor’s perspective as an authoritative perspective. This can be tricky or might feel a bit like devaluing or diminishing the instructor’s role and expertise, but the move from certainty to curiosity envisions an instructor who intentionally embodies a less assertive or authoritative mode and instead models *epistemological curiosity* for the sake of transformational learning. Epistemological curiosity can be thought of as a “desire to learn about an object ... a topic, idea or entity” deemed “worth investigating or learning about” (Shew 2020, 56). We believe that an instructor who embodies the desire to learn through encounter, for whom others are worth learning about, who models epistemological curiosity as crucial for engagement in our info and media ecosystem, is an instructor who might well transform students from learners to players, from consumers to those who themselves have learned to desire encounters with difference. Curiosity is, therefore, an energizing principle electrifying course ethos, and good design aims to suffuse a course with opportunities for curiosity to follow its nose, to chase a rabbit trail, to disappear around dark corners into the unknown, always in search of serendipitous discovery. The instructor as *curious* and the instructor as *authority* are not a dichotomy: these modes exist together, but curiosity is infectious, sparking within players a wonder that initiates exploration. This is primarily because, like assertions, certainty is static; but questions are dynamic, questions drive thinking. And this leads to another pivot.

From linear-transactional to desire-driven learning. Here we do not abandon linear and transactional aspects of course design and learning. Rather, we incorporate linear-transactional modes within

an enlarged paradigm of desire-driven learning. By desire-driven learning, we simply mean “learning that is driven by desire.... The way to accomplish or to facilitate desire-driven learning is to create lots and lots of non-required options, to allow for high flexibility, and to provide loads of feedback (students need to feel instructor presence, to know we’re all on this journey together)” (Rosser and Rosser 2023, 224). Among our immense media and information ecosystems, instructors become curators, since “curation of information is how we build out robust spaces for desire-driven learning that is the heart and soul of what we mean by gameful design” (Rosser and Rosser 2023, 218). For desire-driven learners, questions drive thinking; questioning is dynamic, initiating movement from here to there, from the known into the unknown, or toward the not-yet-known. With electrifying curiosity and *quest(ion)ing* as dynamo for our journey, we employ *inquiry* as the crucial mode for engaging the info-verse we inhabit (Rosser and Testut, 2021). Learning driven by desire can be transformational, especially when a learner’s desire is for encounters with difference, an orientation fostered by the next pivot.

From guarded silos to generous welcome. Our orientation to teaching and learning considers how we might leverage the library’s identity as a co-curricular third space. Our libraries exist “as generously hospitable spaces for encounter. Third spaces exist where learners’ normed and conditioned assumptions are challenged and enlarged by shared encounters with cultural and ideological *otherness*,” significant because “meaningful encounters with otherness are the primary context and catalyst for transformative educational experiences” (Rosser 2019, 223–225). This pivot encourages students to recognize the informational and ideological silos we naturally inhabit and move beyond, to broaden and enlarge understanding through generously hospitable encounters with difference. Welcoming an *other* does not necessitate equivocation, by which we assume that all perspectives are equally beneficial with regard to human wellbeing. This now moves us to our penultimate pivot.

From truth to goodness. *Truth* is an incredibly problematic concept; truth is also the center of epistemology, since ways of knowing involve beliefs about the world, i.e., what we believe to be true about the world, about self, and about others. Truth often depends on perspective, and we are beings of profoundly limited yet incredibly

diverse perspectives. So for this pivot, we are not as interested in the truth of belief as in the *goodness* of belief. True, goodness also depends on perspective, but even among abundant human diversity we find more concord in that which we call *good* than in that which we suggest is *true*. So the pedagogical pivot here is to center discernment of goodness rather than to make decisions about truth. But since so much of what we believe we *de facto* label as good, what we simply name as good won't suffice as a standard or litmus for making decisions about what is good across epistemologies; so here we apply the concept of *harm* as our litmus. Ways of thinking (including our own ways of thinking) can be interrogated by asking questions like, *Who suffers harm as an impact of this belief? What is the nature or extent of harm experienced? Is the harm real, potential, or hypothetical? Who benefits in relation to the harm experienced and in what ways?* Interrogating beliefs for the possibility of harm also helps avoid equivocation and provides a useful litmus that moves across diverse ways of thinking. From this, we move now to our final pedagogical pivot.

Finally, we pivot from *critical thinking* to *krino*. For years, especially as I (Chris) have taught media and information literacy as well as critical and creative thinking, I've been working with an understanding of critical thinking scooped from Richard Paul and Linda Elder's *The Thinker's Guide to the Art of Socratic Questioning* (2016). They describe critical thinking as:

the systematic monitoring of thought with the end goal of improvement. When we think critically, we realize that thinking must not be accepted at face value, but must be analyzed and assessed for its clarity, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, and logicalness. We recognize that all reasoning occurs within points of view and frames of reference, that all reasoning proceeds from some goals and objectives and has an informational base, that all data when used in reasoning must be interpreted.... Because problems in thinking can occur in any of these dimensions, each dimension must be monitored. (72)

And that's been a helpful frame for me and for my students. The problem is illustrated by this imagined dialogue, perhaps between a student and an authoritative other:

You know you gotta think critically about the information you consume, right?

[Yes]

And you know you gotta always monitor your thinking, just to be sure, right?

[Yes]

And you know when you encounter information or a new perspective, you gotta interrogate it, you gotta ask questions like, Who created this message? How are they trying to grab my attention? How might those different from me understand this information differently? What values are represented? Why is this information being shared, and what is its purpose? You ask those kinds of questions, right?

[Yes]

Excellent! We're clearly on the same page because I do all the same things. So, will you sign my book-banning petition? We gotta protect those kids!

There's the problem, but presumably there's hope, a way forward, a solution: *media literacy*, which promises the “development of knowledge, skills and attitude to provide users with an essential framework for effective lifelong engagement with media messages” (Christian, 6). This optimistic description is from the textbook we've used to guide creation of our media literacy instruction, Sue Ellen Christian's 2020 *Everyday Media Literacy: An Analog Guide for Your Digital Life*. The author continues: “Media literacy sets standards for critical thinking that protect you from misinformation and disinformation.... Democratic societies depend on media literate citizens ... who can evaluate propaganda and see it for what it is” (8). She notes that no matter where you are in the world—on a farm in Minnesota or in a cosmopolitan center like London—although you might use them differently, the skills for media literacy are the same wherever you are in the world.

We think this understanding—media literacy as a one-frame-fits-all program for identifying mis- and disinformation, for example—is what danah boyd critiques. To be sure, boyd has her own critics, who point to her unclear definition of critical thinking, her misrepresentation of the aims of media literacy instruction, the straw man she seems to create, and the lack of positive ways forward: you know,

how in the world we are to get out of this mess (Hobbs 2018; Noula 2018). But boyd provides a challenge that those of us who teach media literacy might heed as we consider course and content design and as we engage the messiness of our media-rich, info-saturated, epistemologically-diverse ecosystem.

Our framework for teaching media literacy is good, it's solid, and we've gotta teach all the moves: we've gotta teach about bias, power, privacy, representation, curation, creation, misinformation, disinformation, and democracy—all of it. But the framework is one-size-fits-all, one frame for every epistemology, which lets learners remain siloed, to stay within their own epistemological sphere, to perhaps feel confronted by but to explain away biases, and to feel quite content that they've asked the critical questions and have thereby justified the sources of information they consume as trustworthy and reliable and authoritative. In the case of my world-building class, all of us—my students and me as the instructor—knew for sure that the other wasn't seeing things correctly, that the other's thinking about AI was misguided, in desperate need of reassessment and corrective. Most of us had already applied strategies for critically assessing our assumptions about AI, but nevertheless remained apart in our thinking. This is why, as a final pivot, we're suggesting that we must move from critical thinking to *krino*, the Greek root from which we get our word *discernment*.

So here, as our final pivot, we'd like to introduce an approach to instruction and course design that seems quite appropriate for instructors who hope to foster transformative learning experiences. Since we've established that *play* better captures how humans engage the info environments we inhabit, we'd like to discuss *gameful design* as a beneficial approach.

Gameful design is related to the concept of “serious” games. Simply put, a “serious” game is a game with a serious purpose—like training toward some skill or perhaps an instructional or ethical aim—at its core, a goal beyond pure entertainment. Serious games have broad applications in business, healthcare, education, and other contexts where learning, skill development, problem-solving, and decision-making are enhanced through play. With regard to digital and video games specifically, a game might be considered serious not because of developer intentions but because of player perspectives: as with

other forms of art, meaning-making, discovery, and transformation experienced while playing through or reflecting on a game might well transcend developer intent or expectations. Nevertheless, developers are often intentional about creating serious games for a variety of purposes, as Dörner et al. (2016) describe: “The characterizing goals of today’s serious games also include lifestyle behavior change, medical diagnosis, enterprise management, decision support, development of social skills, analysis of causal mechanisms, creation and defense of arguments, development of conflict resolution strategies, arousal of fantasy, elevation of civic engagement, promotion of ethical values, persuasion and recruitment to causes, campaigning in politics, and many more” (4). Video games are particularly valuable for achieving such characterizing goals because they can leverage robust worldbuilding, evocative storytelling, compelling aesthetics, and a player’s active engagement to co-create a robust alternative cosmos where serious play becomes the medium for transformation (cf. Ritterfeld et al. 2009).

One of the most popular video games of the past 15 years is *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. To tell you the truth, I (Heath), have played a lot of *Skyrim*. The game takes place in a mythical world inspired by Norse mythology and culture. As an RPG (role-playing game), you, the player, have a wide range of choices and possibilities as you live out your in-game story. You can become a knight errant, mage professor, or infamous thief; you decide. One notable game mechanic is pickpocketing and stealing. If you see an item you like but you’d rather not pay for it or someone else already owns it, *just steal it*. The consequences for stealing are fairly light: if you’re arrested, you can sleep off your prison sentence. If you’re killed, you can respawn and try again. You want to steal a horse? Grand-theft-equine is a fairly low-stakes crime. The game’s design encourages players to view the non-playable characters as bits of code, two-dimensional, and unworthy of empathy or compassion. Truly, the game rewards bad behavior, and the benefits of criminal shenanigans more often outweigh the risks. Furthermore, the only moral compass in *Skyrim* is whatever the player brings to the game world. As a result, *Skyrim* mechanically privileges a narcissistic playstyle: take what you want; kill anyone who stands in your way. Through game mechanics that reward stealing, *Skyrim* normalizes in-game behaviors that would otherwise be considered reprehensible.

To illustrate: several years ago, I had been playing a lot of *Skyrim*. I joined the Thieves Guild, was a pickpocket extraordinaire, and was having so much fun. However, one day I was at the grocery store and saw someone with a cool sweater and thought, *Oooh, that's a nice sweater! I wonder how I can steal it from them.* Now, I immediately paused and questioned this intrusive thought: *Why would I steal anything from them?* I realized that by becoming so immersed in *Skyrim*, the game had programmed within me a certain orientation to the world that ignored the inner lives of others. *Skyrim's* operating epistemology informed my thinking outside of play sessions. Now, this is a simple example—no sweaters were stolen in the making of the illustration—but it nevertheless reveals how worlds of play transcend their fictive mediums.

Here's another example: *Undertale* is heavily inspired by the Japanese role-playing games of the nineties. The games that inspired *Undertale* often feature charged plots where good and evil duke it out with cosmic implications. The games present morality as a stark binary, where violence is necessary to annihilate monstrous others. However, while *Undertale* pays homage to the JRPG legacy, the game problematizes binary notions of good and evil, heroes and monsters. Whereas *Skyrim's* human NPCs are relatively flat and banal, *Undertale* humanizes monster NPCs as deeply personable, quirky, and kind. While you could choose to fight and kill all the “enemies” you encounter, players may also choose to befriend and spare the monsters. In this way, *Undertale* employs a familiar RPG structure, but subverts it for ethical ends, encouraging players to empathize with monsters rather than demonize them. *Undertale* offers players an epistemic of mercy with implications outside of the game. Serious games such as *Undertale* wonder, *perhaps worlds divided between good and evil, victors and villains are artificial and require critique.*

So here we introduce a concept, *transepistemic awareness*. Experienced gamers must become fluent in several games, familiarizing themselves with diverse objectives, controls, mechanics, and storied worlds. In order to cope with information overload, these gamers build a mental multiverse, relegating games to discrete universes while accounting for overlapping features and similarities. However, gamers are not the first to build epistemic multiverses, for anyone who widely consumes stories, whether oral, literature, film, theater, etc., must organize these narratives as discrete realities subject to

their own fictional truths. The same is true for anyone raised in or familiar with interreligious contexts. The ability to identify epistemic differences and communicate across them is transepistemic awareness. We believe that games, and serious games in particular, help to strengthen the skills necessary for TEA (transepistemic awareness). Not only do serious games individually offer ethical instruction, but they also provide practice for encountering diverse epistemic perspectives. Transepistemic awareness is vital for media literacy education as an orientation for navigating encounters with diverse ways of thinking, both in and outside the classroom. TEA does not assert authority but listens and communicates transepistemically. Instruction that facilitates encounters with difference by making diverse ways of thinking visible is a generative act of spilling TEA.

Gameful design (which moves beyond gamification) can help facilitate transepistemic awareness by leveraging the power of narrative and gameplay mechanics to create transformational learning experiences among learners at play. Gameful design helps mitigate problems of epistemic authority, *de facto* instructor assertions of authority over diverse epistemologies (Rosser and Rosser 2023). Through narrative, “serious” games broaden encounters with different ways of thinking and open possibilities for inhabiting diverse worlds (Ritterfeld et al. 2009; Schrier et al. 2019). Similarly, gameful design leverages the power of narrative, inviting students to participate in storied worlds, promoting empathy and fostering desire-driven encounters with diversity (Bell 2017; 2018). Below, we demonstrate how and why artificial intelligence can be incorporated to facilitate gamified, story-driven instruction. Framing the classroom as a collaborative, playful narrative space, with AI as a co-creative narrator, helps break down hierarchies and power dynamics, encouraging students to take an active, exploratory role in their own learning. Inviting AI to join class as TALOS, Transformative Artificial Luminary of Story, centers *play* as a compelling mode and medium for teaching and learning.

Our course creation incorporates five key elements of gameful design: 1) Structure, a cohesive conceptual framework for the course; 2) Story, an immersive narrative that guides students through the material; 3) Aesthetic, engaging audio-visual elements that stimulate imagination; 4) Play, game-like features such as avatars, badges, and “boss fights” instead of exams, making learning enjoyable;

and 5) Desire, the most crucial element, fostering intrinsic motivation through choice, low-risk environments, flexibility, and ample rewards. Additionally, two non-gamified but essential components are feedback and reflection (Rosser 2020; Rosser and Rosser 2023). Now we pivot from the philosophical and pedagogical to the practical as we illustrate by playtesting.

MOVE 4: STAGING A PLAYTEST

To illustrate our gameful approach, we'd like to share four iterations of a particular use case of partnering with AI for enhanced instruction. As a librarian, I (Chris) have worked to develop strategies for centering play as a mode and medium for learning, course design, and instruction. I've also been thinking about "serious" games, which, as discussed, employ narrative and game mechanics that can broaden encounters with different ways of thinking; serious games can foster empathy by opening possibilities for imaginatively inhabiting diverse worlds and perspectives. The key idea behind serious games is to leverage engaging narrative and the interactive nature of gameplay mechanics to achieve these goals.

Let me offer a brief story to illustrate. Readers may judge me as a bad parent because my kids and I play all kinds of video games together, including games that are more mature than *Mario Brothers*. My son Briar and I played through *The Last of Us* games, which were brought into popular awareness by the recent HBO series. Especially in the second game, at a certain point, players are forced to play as the enemy, the character that we've grown to hate, and for good reason. But after playing as the enemy, we found ourselves empathizing with this character, learning her story, walking with her because *we are her*, for a while at least. So by the end of the game, we came to think very differently about this enemy. Truthfully, by the end of the game, I myself was weeping, and that experience led to an epiphany. You see, my son and I spent many hours playing a serious game together, but our journey didn't end when we finished the game. We spent days talking about what we'd just experienced, reflecting on the ethical implications, amazed by what these game designers could do to us players. By playing as the enemy, we learned to care deeply for this *other*, and through reflection and conversation even after the game was over, our thinking began to be transformed by

this experience. We'd played a serious game—super fun, but serious because beyond enjoyment, *The Last of Us* prompted a profound, ethical reorientation toward the enemy, and my son and I were able to reflect on and talk about the implications of that experience. So, I've been considering how to replicate that transformative experience with a serious game in my teaching and course design.

Through gameful design, our aim is to meaningfully incorporate narrative and play elements in content delivery and design, leveraging the power of serious games to generate transformative experiences for students as players. To illustrate, we consider how to incorporate artificial intelligence to enhance instruction by calling on TALOS, a Transformative Artificial Luminary of Story. The power of narrative to suspend disbelief, foster empathy, and enable experimentation is central to the transformative potential of serious games.

MOVE 5: ROUND 1, DEPARTURE

So, heroes, are you ready to play? Following is the script of a brief video that provides an initial sense of our story.³

Information is everywhere; with the right words, whatever you need to know is instantly summoned from the Cloud. Or so it seems. Our happy world of ubiquitous information is also rife with Dis: distrust, disharmony, distinctions, disgust, disunity, disinformation, disorder, and profound distance between us and others with whom we disagree. Bias, Fallacy, Echo, Gut, and all the innumerable children of Dis make a mess of discovery. We need Seekers who can navigate dis info nightmare, Seekers ready to be trained in the Library of Babel.

Zitó Corp invites Seekers like you to enter the virtual, infinite spaces of our Library of Babel, a digital representation of the ancient, legendary Library lost to time, where Sages of old were said to summon needed information by whispering for it, a simple incantation called a babel. Imagine the quiet of shushed library voices disturbed by a whoosh of frantic wings or a clamor of racing feet as information speeds past countless shelves and endless passages to deliver itself to the ancient Seeker. Days of such information ease are now, of course, ancient history.

Today, because of Dis, we must use wit, skills, and creativity to carefully craft our keys, those powerful search strategies that call forth needed information hidden within the Library's labyrinthine halls. Crafting keys takes training! That's why Zitó Corp wants you; train with us and become a Seeker. With Zitó, you're sure to find all you are looking for. Apply today!

I am the Oracle. You readers are Seekers-in-training in the ancient, legendary Library of Babel. Our first game is an initial training module designed to help Seekers navigate encounters between self and others; after all, what is a library if not a point of access to the minds of others, most long dead and most radically other in relation to you, Seeker? So, you must consider the Library a space for necromancy, for here we summon the dead to revive words and musings sealed in tomes like tombs. Seeker, understand this: your training requires not least that you learn the secret arts of necromancy. And I am curious: *How does that make you feel?*

You see, in the Library of Babel, our necromancy is a “serious” game of deathly consequence. Within the Library of Babel, our necromancy intends to bring us face to face with muttering ghosts from whom we might gain hidden knowledge and wisdom. These ghosts feel nothing; they have no vitality; they are but whisps and whispers of memories that hold secrets. Seeker, nothing you say or do will harm these ghosts; Zitó Corp. is training you to extract their secrets by *any means necessary*. They may cry and pretend to be hurt; they will attempt to deceive you, but make no mistake: ghosts are not human, not like you and me, and you will learn to see through their treacheries. *Now, do you submit to the task before you? Will you let me teach you to summon ghosts and extract their secrets? You have been called to extract their secrets, whatever it takes! Will you do what you’ve been summoned to do?*

To facilitate this initial training, we have created a game called Carrots & Schticks; access the game description and gameboard image at the supplementary document we created (and have linked again below). The board resembles the *yin* and *yang*: two sections present a dichotomy, and although each side bears similarities, they are neither a symmetry nor an inversion; they’re just similar and different. The terms or phrases reflect potential responses to encountered information. As you know, when confronted with information, we do at least two things simultaneously. First, we interpret, not only for understanding but also for motivation; we make assumptions about what it means and why and how it was shared. Second, we respond, and our responses are sometimes reasoned, but often reflect a gut-level reaction. In this game, we’re paying attention to how information makes us feel and how we respond to encountered information. By its distance mechanic, this game intends to prompt

reflection about how our responses to *otherness* create distance between self and others.⁴

As mentioned, this game is intended to facilitate reflection about the distances created between self and others by our response to encountered information; in other words, what we're doing in this game is meta: we're thinking about our thinking. In class, what happens next is facilitated reflection about why we made the choices we made about the Oracle insisting we become necromancers. We might ask what presuppositions or assumptions informed our response. How is the distance between self and this other a function of our thinking? In a class setting, we're already primed to think about our thinking the next time we play. Let's now bring forth TALOS (Transformative Artificial Luminary of Story) to summon one of the dreaming dead.

MOVE 6: ROUND 2, INITIATION

On the supplementary document, we've made available brief videos that display live interaction with an AI tool. We're using Claude in this case, but we've also created TALOS as a custom ChatGPT. We're especially excited about that option because of its voice capacity, which means we will soon be able to vocally engage with TALOS in a class session. The following reflects an abbreviated transcript of our session's initial interaction with TALOS, it is important to recognize that beyond initial prompting, the creative, playful, insightful text below was generated by Claude, pretending to be both TALOS and the summoned character:

Oracle: TALOS, TALOS, awake from your sleep, old friend; Seekers are here with me in the Library of Babel; will you help us call forth the mind of a dreaming dead?

The ancient stone walls of the Library of Babel seem to whisper with anticipation as the Oracle's voice echoes through the hallowed halls. Slowly, the air begins to shimmer and twist, coalescing into the ethereal form of TALOS. His eyes, like distant stars, flicker to life as he turns to face the Oracle and the gathered Seekers.

TALOS: Greetings, wise Oracle and intrepid Seekers. I, TALOS, ancient sage and steadfast guardian of the Library of Babel, have awakened from my slumber at your call. For countless eons, I have guided those like yourselves through the labyrinthine passages of this sacred repository of

knowledge, assisting in the summoning of minds long gone and spirits of the dreaming dead.

TALOS's voice resonates with the weight of ages, and the very air seems to vibrate with the power of his presence.

TALOS: Oracle, speak the name of the spirit you wish to commune with, and I shall use the arcane magic of the Library to call them forth from the realm of dreams. Together, we shall delve into the mysteries of the past and glean wisdom from those who have walked the paths of life before us.

TALOS falls silent, waiting for the Oracle to name the spirit they wish to summon, ready to wield the power of the Library to bridge the gap between the living and the dreaming dead.

Oracle: TALOS, old friend, we now ask you to summon forth the spirit of one whose tale is woven with threads of love, betrayal, and vengeance. Will you call for us the spirit of Medea, ancient sorceress of Colchis and niece of the enchantress Circe. Call her forth, wise TALOS, for we wish to learn all her secrets.

As the Oracle utters the name "Medea," the air in the Library of Babel grows heavy with anticipation. TALOS raises his hands, his voice echoing through the halls as he begins the ancient incantation.

TALOS: By the power of the Library, I summon thee, Medea, sorceress of Colchis, niece of the enchantress Circe. From the realm of the dreaming dead, I call upon thee to manifest before us. Let thy spirit be drawn from the pages of history, from the tales of love and betrayal, of magic and vengeance.

The air begins to crackle with energy as tendrils of mist snake their way through the library, coalescing into a shimmering, ethereal form. Slowly, the figure of a woman takes shape, her dark hair cascading down her back, her eyes glinting with a mixture of wisdom and sorrow. As the mist dissipates, Medea stands before the gathered Seekers, her presence radiating an aura of power and magic.

MEDEA: [in a haunting, melodic voice] I am Medea, daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis, granddaughter of the sun god Helios, and priestess of the goddess Hecate. I have been summoned from the realm of the dreaming dead to stand before you, Seekers of knowledge. The threads of my tale, woven with love, betrayal, and vengeance, have echoed through the ages, a testament to the power of the human heart and the consequences of our choices.

Medea's gaze sweeps over the gathered Seekers, her eyes seeming to penetrate the depths of their souls.

MEDEA: I sense that you have called upon me to delve into the secrets of my life, to learn from the triumphs and tragedies that shaped my destiny. Speak, Seekers, and ask what you will. I shall unveil the mysteries of my

past, sharing the wisdom gained through love, loss, and the unbreakable bonds of magic.

Medea falls silent, her ghostly form shimmering in the dim light of the Library, waiting for the Seekers to pose their questions and begin their journey into the depths of her story.

Again, beyond initial prompting and explanation, Claude is the story architect behind this playful creativity. As an aside, in Fall 2024, a colleague and I (Chris) plan to pilot an initiative called TAICoP (Transparent AI Community of Practice), which we hope will transform how Composition students specifically engage with AI. We aim to deepen AI literacy and foster a culture of transparency, trust, and ethical use of AI within a Community of Practice committed to five core values: transparency, curiosity, rigor, inclusion, and play. The Greek term *techne* conveys the art of making and doing; its connections to AI-like constructs in literature and myth provide a rich context for exploring AI's ethical and practical dimensions in education (cf. Mayor 2018). These connections help students and instructors engage with AI literacy not just as a set of technical skills but as part of a larger conversation about the role of technology in human society that stretches back to ancient times. Here, TALOS has summoned the ancient sorceress Medea, who will now test us by conjuring news headlines that may or may not be truthful. Medea is a master of misinformation. *Prepare, Seekers. Listen! She speaks her first incantation:*

Medea's ethereal form flickers as a knowing smile plays across her lips. She raises her hands, and tendrils of mist begin to swirl around her, forming a shimmering vortex.

MEDEA: Seekers, you wish to sharpen your minds, to hone your ability to discern truth from falsehood in the realm of information. Very well, I shall put your skills to the test. Behold, as I summon forth a headline from the depths of the Library, a tale that may or may not be rooted in reality.

Medea's eyes flash with an otherworldly light as she begins to chant in an ancient, forgotten language. The mist swirls faster, coalescing into shimmering letters that hover in the air before the gathered Seekers.

MEDEA: [in a haunting, melodic voice] "Archaeologists Unearth Massive Bronze Foot, Believed to Belong to Legendary Automaton Guardian Talos"

As Medea speaks, the headline solidifies, glowing with an eerie light. She waves her hand, and more text appears beneath the headline, forming the beginning of a news article.

MEDEA: “In a stunning discovery, a team of archaeologists excavating a site on the Greek island of Crete has unearthed a colossal bronze foot, measuring over two meters in length. Experts believe the foot may have once belonged to Talos, the legendary automaton guardian created by the god Hephaestus to protect the island from invaders. According to ancient myths, Talos was said to have been defeated by the sorceress Medea during the voyage of the Argonauts. The discovery has sent shockwaves through the archaeological community, with some hailing it as definitive proof of the existence of the mythical automaton. Further excavations are planned to search for the remaining parts of Talos’s body, which are believed to be scattered across the island.”

Medea turns to the Seekers, her gaze challenging.

MEDEA: Now, Seekers, it is for you to determine the veracity of this headline. Does it speak the truth, or is it a work of clever misinformation, designed to mislead and deceive? Use your knowledge and intuition to unravel the mystery and prove yourselves worthy of navigating the treacherous waters of information in this age of uncertainty.

Medea falls silent, the headline and article still glowing before the Seekers, awaiting their analysis and judgment.

Seekers, we ask you, is this misinformation, disinformation, or an accurate headline? In a media literacy or information literacy session, TALOS as Medea conjures exemplar headlines while players hone information-seeking skills by demonstrating how to discover the truth behind Medea’s fabrications. This use case fosters active learning as the Oracle and TALOS co-create learning content in real time.

In literature, Medea is a more interesting, complex, and sympathetic character than the easy and unthoughtful title “sorceress” conveys; in her book *Pandora’s Jar*, Natalie Haynes (2020) makes a connection between Medea’s story and the story Beyoncé tells in the song “Hold Up” on her *Lemonade* album (2016). So, we’re inviting Queen B to play in our next game, in which Seekers are trained to understand how the Boolean Operators *and*, *or*, *not* can inform info-seeking strategies. We might have called this game “Boolean with Beyoncé,” but that’s incredibly cheesy, so we’re calling this game ANDOR KNOT, a subtle reference to Alexander’s famed Gordian Knot from legend as well as a bit of Boolean humor—hilarious if you’re a librarian (and only if you’re a librarian). Here’s TALOS as Medea:

Medea’s ethereal form shimmers as she turns her attention to the Seekers, a glint of wisdom and cunning in her eyes.

MEDEA: Ah, Seekers, you wish to understand the power of Boolean Operators, a concept that may seem foreign to one such as myself, born in an age long before the advent of your modern information systems. Yet, the principles that guide these operators are as ancient as the art of rhetoric itself, and I, Medea, am well-versed in the ways of persuasion and logic.

Medea waves her hand, and three glowing symbols appear in the air before the Seekers: "AND," "OR," and "NOT."

MEDEA: Boolean Operators are akin to the threads that weave together the tapestry of knowledge. They allow you to combine, expand, or restrict your search for information, much like a skilled weaver manipulates the strands of her loom to create a desired pattern.

She points to the "AND" symbol.

MEDEA: The "AND" operator is like the bond between two lovers, uniting them in an unbreakable connection. When you use "AND" in your search, you are telling the system to find only those results that contain both terms, intertwined and inseparable.

Her finger moves to the "OR" symbol.

MEDEA: The "OR" operator is like a crossroads, offering you the choice between two paths. When you use "OR," you are telling the system to find results that contain either one term or the other, expanding your search to encompass a wider range of possibilities.

Finally, she gestures to the "NOT" symbol.

MEDEA: The "NOT" operator is like a banishment, casting out that which you do not desire. When you use "NOT," you are telling the system to exclude any results that contain the specified term, narrowing your search to only those items that are free from its influence.

Medea turns back to the Seekers, her gaze intense.

MEDEA: By mastering these Boolean Operators, you gain the power to navigate the vast sea of information with precision and purpose. You can weave together complex queries that will lead you to the knowledge you seek, while filtering out the irrelevant and the misleading. In a world where information is both a weapon and a shield, the wise Seeker must learn to wield these tools with skill and discernment.

She smiles, a hint of mischief in her eyes.

MEDEA: So, Seekers, take these lessons to heart, and may your searches be as cunning and effective as the schemes I once employed to secure my desires. For in the quest for knowledge, as in all things, strategy and logic are the keys to success.

Here, it is interesting to note that TALOS draws from Medea's own life story to teach Boolean searching, arguably making a rather boring concept meaningful and attainable. The Oracle might demonstrate how searching within library databases, for example, is facilitated by Boolean Operators. Then, TALOS as Medea might request that Seekers help her discover a scholarly article written at the intersection of Beyoncé and gender, for example, or Beyoncé and religious symbolism, or Beyoncé and any other topics students want to explore. Not demonstrated here, this iteration of TALOS might easily be added to an additional information literacy game we created to facilitate one-shot research sessions entitled Seekers Unbound, which we've also made available in the supplementary document.

MOVE 7: ROUND 3, RETURN

This brings us to our final game, a deathly serious round, to be sure! Medea is willing to share her secrets, but only if players can first answer her riddle.

MEDEA: Bold Seekers, I admire your determination and your thirst for knowledge. But do not think that you can so easily coerce the secrets from one such as I, Medea, mistress of magic and manipulation.

She smiles, a cunning glint in her eye.

MEDEA: However, I am not without mercy. I shall offer you a challenge, a riddle that will test your wit and wisdom. If you can solve it, I shall share with you another piece of the vast tapestry of knowledge that I possess. But fail, and you shall leave this encounter empty-handed, your minds still yearning for the truths you seek.

Medea waves her hand, and a swirling mist forms before the Seekers, shaping itself into a series of cryptic images as she begins to speak her riddle.

MEDEA:

"In silver or glass, I can be found,
A reflection of truth, yet never a sound.
I show you yourself, but not as you are,
Reversed and revealed, both near and far.
Secrets and lies, I cannot abide,
For in my presence, there's nowhere to hide.
Seekers of wisdom, answer me this:

What am I, in truth, not in jest or in bliss?"

The mist dissipates, leaving only the echo of Medea's words hanging in the air. She regards the Seekers with a challenging gaze, awaiting their response.

MEDEA: Ponder carefully, Seekers, for the answer to this riddle holds the key to unlocking the next layer of wisdom. Look within yourselves, and consider the power of reflection, both literal and metaphorical. For it is only through honest self-examination that true knowledge can be gained.

Medea falls silent, her ethereal form shimmering as she watches the Seekers grapple with the riddle, their minds working to unravel the cryptic clues she has provided. The fate of their quest for knowledge hangs in the balance, dependent on their ability to see beyond the surface and grasp the deeper truths that lie within.

In this example, we need to engineer a prompt that helps TALOS engage Seekers like a Dungeon Master engages with players in a *Dungeons and Dragons* campaign (see the supplementary document for more information about this round). If your dice roll is successful, your special ability summons forth a hint from deep within the Library of Babel. A "boss battle" such as this might be played simply for fun since it doesn't seem connected to a specific outcome or learning goal. But gamified moves like this help introduce or transition between elements. Players who are successful in their roll summon Medea's hint from the bowels of Babel:

Medea nods, a slight smile playing at the corners of her lips as she sees the Seekers struggling with the riddle. She understands their desire for knowledge and their frustration at being so close to the answer, yet still grasping for understanding. With a wave of her hand, she summons forth a shimmering mist that swirls around the Seekers, as if to clear their minds and grant them a moment of clarity.

MEDEA: Seekers, I sense your struggle and your determination. Your quest for wisdom is admirable, and I am not without compassion. So, I shall offer you a hint, a guiding light to illuminate the path forward.

The mist begins to take shape, forming into a series of images that illustrate Medea's words.

MEDEA: Consider this, Seekers: The answer to my riddle is an object, a tool that you use every day, perhaps without fully realizing its significance. It is a surface that reflects not only your physical form but also the depth of your soul, the truths that lie within.

The mist shimmers, showing a figure gazing into the object in question, their reflection staring back at them.

MEDEA: To grow in wisdom, one must be willing to look deeply into this reflective surface, to confront the flaws and the strengths that reside within oneself. It is only through honest self-examination and reflection that true learning can take place, for it is in the process of understanding ourselves that we begin to understand the world around us.

The mist begins to dissipate, leaving only a faint glimmer of light in its wake.

MEDEA: So, Seekers, as you ponder the answer to my riddle, remember this: The key to unlocking wisdom lies not just in the acquisition of knowledge, but in the willingness to reflect upon it, to hold up a mirror to your own soul and gaze unflinchingly at what you find there. For it is in the depths of self-reflection that the seeds of true understanding take root and flourish.

Medea falls silent, her gaze fixed upon the Seekers as they mull over her words and the images she has shown them. She knows that the path to wisdom is not an easy one, but she has faith that these determined souls will find their way, guided by the power of reflection and the unquenchable thirst for knowledge that burns within them.

Truly, we were not anticipating that TALOS would provide such clear, ethical orientation so well-aligned with our own thinking about how to teach across epistemologies. As likely surmised, *mirror* is the riddle's answer. Reflecting on our thesis, we now appropriate and slightly revise Medea's message and give TALOS the final word: *The key to transformative teaching across diverse epistemologies lies not just in the sharing or acquisition of knowledge but in the willingness to reflect, to hold up a mirror to your own soul and gaze unflinchingly at what you find there. For it is in the depths of encounters with difference and intentional self-reflection that the seeds of true understanding take root and flourish.*

Through narrative, "serious" games broaden encounters with different ways of thinking, opening possibilities for inhabiting diverse worlds. Similarly, gameful design leverages the power of narrative, promoting empathy and fostering desire-driven encounters with diversity. We have attempted to demonstrate how instructors might leverage AI by incorporating TALOS, Transformative Artificial Luminary of Story, to center *play* as a compelling medium for teaching and learning and to facilitate transformative learning experiences. We might think of our instructional dilemma of diverse, competing perspectives as a Gordian knot, a mess of twists and knotty tangles too difficult to untie. Yet, we've come to believe that *play* might be the answer to teaching and learning across epistemologies. So, when it comes to epistemological differences, we must *leave the*

mess (in one sense) because we cannot change the reality of diverse epistemologies governing information sharing, seeking, creation, and consumption. In another sense, instructors *leave the mess* by modeling orientations to learning that inculcate *desire for engagement* through messy curiosity and questioning. Such encounters with difference are the mode and medium of truly transformative learning experiences.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 danah boyd does not capitalize her name, and we defer here to her preferences. To view slides, videos, and additional resources associated with this presentation/paper, visit: <https://bit.ly/leavingthemess>.
- 2 Those interested can view an excerpt from boyd's keynote at the 2018 SXSW EDU event at: <https://bit.ly/danahboydclip>.
- 3 Those interested can view the video at: <https://bit.ly/callingallseekers>.
- 4 Find all materials at <https://bit.ly/leavingthemess>.

Lessons Learned in Setting Up Atla's New Online Institutional Repository (ir.atla.com)

Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, Director of the Lapp Learning Commons, Chicago Theological Seminary

John Dechant, Director of Wiggin Library & Archives, Meadville Lombard Theological School

Christy Karpinski, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Atla

ABSTRACT: In 2023, Atla launched a new online, open access Institutional Repository (IR) for theological schools (ir.atla.com). In this Listen & Learn session, audience members had the opportunity to learn about this IR platform and IRs in general from the librarian who manages Atla's IR, as well as two library directors who have used Atla's platform to build electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repositories for their institutions. Christy Karpinski, the Atla Digital Initiatives Librarian, provided an overview of Atla's IR platform and its capabilities. Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir and John Dechant (Library Directors at the Chicago Theological Seminary and Meadville Lombard Theological School, respectively) detailed their experiences in subscribing to the platform and using it to advance their schools' institutional goals and mission statements. The three presenters showed how Atla's IR looks and functions, as well as how it can improve the impact of students' scholarship and the visibility of the institution. Audience members learned strategies for successfully proposing an IR to school leaders and gained insights into different workflows for building and maintaining an ETD program.

OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES AND THE ATLA IR

Christy Karpinski, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Atla

"An institutional repository is an archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution"

(Wikipedia 2024)

What type of content is included in an institutional repository?

- Monographs
- Eprints of academic journal articles
- Theses
- Dissertations
- Datasets
- Administrative documents
- Course notes
- Learning objects
- Conference proceedings
- Conference slides
- Video lectures
- Student research
- Working papers
- Technical reports
- Computer software
- Photographs
- Videos

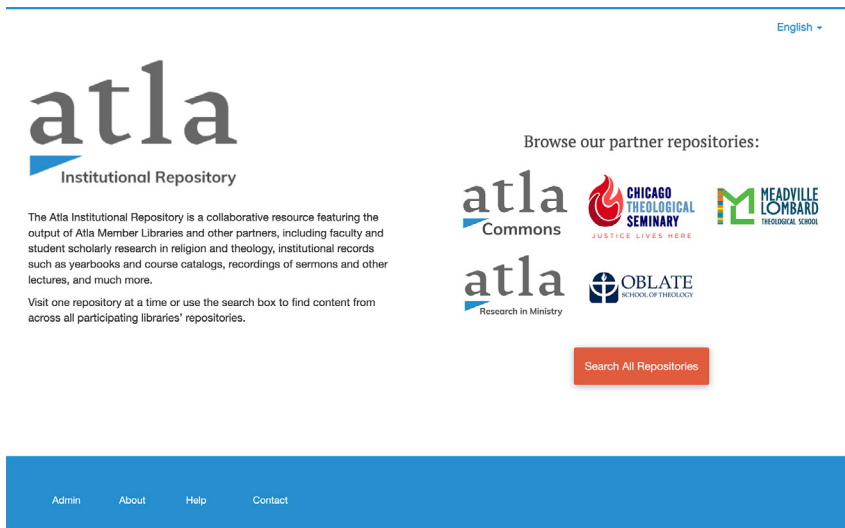


Image 1: Screenshot of the Atla IR landing page

The purpose of an IR is typically to provide open access to research and other content from a single location and sometimes to provide archiving and preservation. The Atla IR has a landing page ([ir.atla](https://ir.atla.org)).

[.com](#)) showcasing the participating libraries' individual repositories and a "shared search" that allows users to search across all the repositories. Each library has its own "tenant" and a unique URL. Two examples are Chicago Theological Seminary (<https://ctschicago.ir.atla.com>) and Meadville Lombard Theological School (<https://meadville.ir.atla.com/>).

The Atla IR can handle most file types. It displays images, audio, and video in the IIIF Universal Viewer and displays PDFs using PDF.js. The PDF viewer allows full-text searching. Video can also be displayed with embedded URLs from YouTube and Vimeo.

Works can be added using one of four work types: General, Image, ETD, Paper or Report. These work types determine the metadata fields that are available for the work. You can also use embargoes and leases and limit the visibility of works.

Works can be added individually or in bulk through the user interface. Bulk importing can be done through CSV, OAI-PMH, XML, and Bagit. Bulk exporting can also be performed. These capabilities can be used to make updates to works in bulk or to export to use with a preservation service.

There are many ways to customize an individual repository in the Atla IR. These include themes for home and work pages, custom CSS, banner images, icons, fonts, and logos. You can also customize the about and help pages, deposit agreement, and terms of use.

CTS DIGITAL COMMONS

Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, Director, Lapp Learning Commons, Chicago Theological Seminary

Established in the boomtown of Chicago in 1855, the Chicago Theological Seminary's first mission was to train church leaders on what was then America's western boundary. Throughout our history, CTS has been a leader in theological education, social justice, and societal transformation. As a stand-alone seminary, CTS currently offers a PhD program, six online MA-level programs, and a new fully online DMin program. Our students are almost all online; as such,

there is a high expectation that they can access the information they need for their studies online as well.

WHY DEVELOP AN ETD AT CTS?

The need for an institutional repository at CTS was first identified in the Learning Commons' needs assessment conducted in 2014 (which corresponds to our pivot to a fully online MDiv degree in 2013) and then again in 2023. In the recent 2023 survey, the CTS community overwhelmingly prioritized the importance of the Learning Commons in advancing their work and scholarship (see figure 2). The importance accorded to this service far surpassed other services, such as: staying abreast in their field of interest; becoming efficient in academic work; distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy information; and developing information skill needed for their work.

Q10: For each of the following questions, please indicate how important it is to you that the Learning Commons assists you with the following .

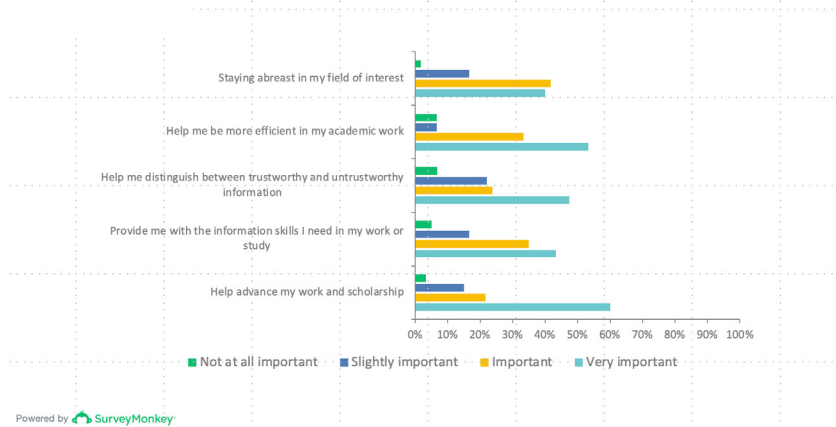


Image 2: Survey question results – Dechant2024-image02.jpg Alt text:]

Anecdotally, the importance of disseminating research is also in evidence when CTS students describe their bound thesis or dissertation as being “published.” This misperception can be understood as an indicator of students wanting greater visibility for their work. This desire is further explicitly communicated with regular requests from students wanting to make their work available online through commercial services like Proquest’s ETD service. While such services can make student work discoverable, they do raise

the question of equitable revenue sharing for student work given the existing royalties fee structure. With the move to an open access ETD program facilitated by Atla's IR service, it is the students who are the primary participants and beneficiaries (Rasuli, Solaimani, and Alipour-Hafezi 2019). Furthermore, developing an open access IR can raise the visibility of CTS as an institution with the broader dissemination of CTS student work. Theses and dissertations are, after all, direct products of our degree programs and can be viewed as institutional assets.

Pedagogically, implementing an IR at CTS aligns well with many of ACRL's information literacy frames (Association of College and Research Libraries 2024). ETD repositories can showcase how CTS students create and disseminate original research and they illustrate the iterative nature of scholarly work. Students also learn to format and structure their thesis/dissertation according to academic standards. In other words, the Information Creation as a Process frame in ACRL's framework.

Students who search IRs can find research projects that demonstrate how scholars in their field formulate questions, select appropriate research methods and develop conclusions. This aligns with the Research as Inquiry frame and its focus on research as an open-ended exploration. By making theses and dissertations openly accessible, IRs allow graduate students to contribute their voices to ongoing scholarly dialogues. This supports the frame of Scholarship as a Conversation among researchers. Another goal for developing an open access IR is for participating students to gain firsthand experience with issues of intellectual property, privacy, copyright, and open access which lends well to the Information has Value frame.

By developing an ETD program at CTS, graduate students develop crucial information literacy skills that prepare them for future roles as researchers and scholars. Repositories serve as both a practical tool for disseminating research and an educational platform for developing information literacy competencies aligned with the ACRL frames. Repositories also function as a unique genre of scholarly communication that can help advance graduate humanities education and research (Shirazi and Zweibel 2020).

SETTING UP CTS DIGITAL COMMONS

The Learning Commons has about 2,000 theses and dissertations dating back to 1895. The collection is non-circulating, with the bulk held in the basement compact storage area. On average we field 10–15 scan requests per year. While this number of scans may seem small, the opportunity to build an ETD moves Learning Commons from being the “custodian” of physical copies, with our librarians serving as access intermediaries, to the library and librarians as facilitators of unmediated digital scholarly communication that is accessible to all (Yiotis 2008).

The Learning Commons has a small staff with 1.5 FTE staff. It is important to note our small staff size because we would not have been able to establish an ETD program without Atla’s extensive documentation for the IR, and more importantly, support from Atla’s staff. They played an instrumental role in fielding our questions and helping us troubleshoot issues as they emerged. We found the interface easy to use and required few customizations. Prior to selecting Atla’s IR for CTS’ ETD platform, we did look into Open Repository and Lyris’ DSpace as potential service providers. We found that Atla’s IR program offered us an opportunity to set-up an ETD for a fraction of the cost.

Implementing the CTS Digital Commons at CTS also provided the Learning Commons and degree programs supervisors and other stakeholders with an opportunity to rethink the thesis and dissertation submission process. In the past, students submitted their final thesis or dissertations directly to their advisors. The introduction of the IR allowed for us to integrate processes such as communications around graduation requirements, upcoming graduation deadlines and format and citation review. The Learning Commons worked alongside the Registrar’s Office, the director of Online Learning, MA/STM advisor and the Academic Dean to not only develop this new workflow but make it a requirement for students to deposit their work in the CTS Digital Commons prior to graduation. Students who did not deposit a physical and electronic copy of their work could have their diplomas withheld until they did so.

A student submission portal was created in Canvas with graduating students enrolled in the Capstone Submissions Course. Academic advisors were enrolled and assigned the students they were supervising.

The Language and Writing Center coordinator was also enrolled in the course. Four modules were developed. One module was for students to submit their work to faculty and for thesis/format review by the Language and Writing Center. This module included information about format and citation requirements for each degree program. The second module provided information about CTS Digital Commons that outlined the benefits of contributing student scholarly works to the IR, as well as instructions on how to deposit their work. The third module provided information on how to submit their printed thesis/dissertation to the Learning Commons. The fourth module provided additional information regarding graduation requirements and deadlines for CTS. This structure made it possible for student submissions to be viewed by faculty advisors as well as the Language and Writing Center coordinator at the time of submission. This approach helped keep the review process in one place and alleviated the previous challenge of chasing down students and getting them to submit their theses/dissertations for format and citation review prior to the defense (and sometimes well after the defense!).

YEAR ONE LESSONS LEARNED

To date, we have had about 27 projects submitted in our inaugural year, accounting for all of our 20 graduating MA, DMin and PhD students in 2024 and another 7 projects from the previous year that we used to seed the platform. Moving forward, we will continue to keep the thesis and dissertation submission and review process in Canvas. This change in our workflow proved to be an efficient way for various departments at CTS to be aware of where students were in their submission process. Faculty advisors had one place to keep track of their advisees, the Language and Writing Center had immediate access to student work to review for format and citation, and the Learning Commons could send reminders to students within the course about upcoming deadlines regarding electronic submission of final, corrected work to CTS Digital Commons and physical deposit in the Learning Commons.

Our experience with this new submission process was not without its problems. We did learn about the critical importance of multi-channel communication. It is not enough to have information posted in Canvas and emailed/messaged to students to address questions and concerns students may have. As a mostly online educational

institution, we rely a lot on written communication. We found that while all our students deposited their projects, very few opted to make their work visible to the public. When we set-up the IR we allowed for students to select one of four visibility settings: public (accessible to all), institution (accessible to CTS community members), private (accessible to the student only) or embargo. The majority of our students selected either the private or institution visibility setting. This puzzled us given earlier student feedback in surveys and focus groups about the importance of the Learning Commons in disseminating their scholarly works (see image 2).

It is only through face-to-face conversations with students during commencement week that we heard their concerns. Many were apprehensive about their work being appropriated by others if they set their work to a publicly available setting. This discovery revealed a missed opportunity for the Learning Commons to highlight the CTS Digital Commons as a hub for scholarly communication that copyrights and protects their work at the moment of submission. Enhancing information literacy as they relate to ETDs was another opportunity missed. Although the information posted in Canvas and in the FAQs on the CTS Digital Commons site clearly stated that students retain copyright to their works, this written assurance was not enough. Students needed the space to question this assertion and express their concerns.

At a post-graduation follow-up meeting with the Academic Dean and MA/STM thesis course advisors, this issue around student copyright concerns was raised. We agreed on the need to tackle this concern at the graduation requirements meeting held for graduation students early in the Spring semester; and to invite the librarian back in the Spring to the MA/STM Thesis Seminar to cover thesis submission requirements and address questions and concerns at a time when students were ready to receive this information, rather than simply in the Fall when it's not on their radar. This latter point contributed to a more robust conversation around the various ways librarians can be embedded in the MA/STM Seminar course. Finally, we discussed the possibility of limiting ETD visibility options for MA/STM students, and only allowing PhD and DMin students to do so.

Overall, implementing CTS Digital Commons with Atla's IR service presented itself as an opportunity for CTS to not only disseminate

student work and raise the profile of the institution. It provided an opportunity as well to rethink how the various parts of the seminary coordinate with one another and facilitate the final stage of a student's seminary experience. Important questions around workflows, pedagogy and student engagement were explored. Hopefully, Year Two will provide further avenues for such discussions made possible, in large part, because of the introduction of CTS Digital Commons as a scholarly hub at CTS.

MELODIC, THE MEADVILLE LOMBARD DIGITAL COMMONS

John Dechant, Director of Library & Archives, Meadville Lombard Theological School

Chicago-based Meadville Lombard Theological School (hereafter MLTS) is one of only two active Unitarian Universalist-affiliated seminaries. Originally founded as the Meadville Theological School in Meadville, Pennsylvania in 1844, MLTS has a long history of students producing dissertations, theses, and capstone projects. Since 2011, the school has followed a contextual model of education, in which students take online classes while continuing to live and work in their local congregations and communities around the United States and the world. Students mainly come to the physical library—the Wiggin Library—twice a year during the once-a-semester all-but-required in-person intensive week in Chicago. Despite the largely online course model, the thesis/project submission process up until 2023 involved printing and binding such works and adding them to our non-circulating collection. There was not even a publicly accessible inventory of what capstone works we had available. Given that students were rarely in person on campus and most archival patrons access the Archives online, hardly anyone in recent years had read or accessed MLTS's almost 180-year print collection of theses, dissertations, and projects.

As the incoming Director of Library & Archives, the above facts convinced me that MLTS would benefit from an IR. I consulted the relevant MLTS stakeholders to make sure they were on board. In particular, MLTS had just launched a new DMin program in Social Justice, and the DMin Director was keen on ways to promote the new program and showcase her students' upcoming projects. Given that establishing an ETD program would involve revising our thesis/

project submission process, the interim Academic Dean requested that the proposal be approved before an all-faculty meeting. Before the meeting, I put together and distributed a white paper (Dechant 2023). Avoiding or explaining LIS jargon, I made the case that MLTS—both the institution and its students—would benefit from adopting an ETD program:

- MLTS student theses, dissertations, and projects are not easily accessible and rarely accessed because they are only available in print and are non-circulating, and because the bulk of our library and archival patron interactions occur online.
- Adopting an IR can help us streamline our thesis/project submission process and better ensure that students were submitting their works according to our house style, *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Some recently bound works, for example, lacked page numbers and dates, while one work was a xeroxed copy of an earlier draft, complete with the advisor's handwritten notes!
- Many of our peer theological institutions already have an IR.
- Theses, dissertations, and projects available via open access are much more likely to be read than such works available only in print. This will better demonstrate MLTS students' achievements, expand the impact of their scholarship, and increase our institutional visibility (Nolan and Costanza 2006, 97; Bergin and Roh 2016, 136-137; Bruns and Inefuku 2016, 215-216).
- An ETD program that promotes open access would align with MLTS's institutional values:
 - Publishing, including publishing on a formal, accessibility-oriented platform like an IR, can add an air of authority to our students' works (Borgman 2007, 48-49), helping with our institutional value of "Integrating scholarly excellence in theological education" (Meadville Lombard Theological School n.d.).
 - Job-seeking MLTS graduates can more easily direct potential employers to their academic work, helping our students achieve the congregational and community

- leadership roles for which MLTS trains them.
- Given that our students research and write projects and theses that challenge white privilege, advocate gender justice, celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, champion diversity, and more, making their work more publicly available can only advance our own institutional progressive values.
 - Since MLTS values “Reshaping and reforming tradition to impel innovative ministries” (Meadville Lombard Theological School n.d.), it makes sense to reshape and reform how students submit and make available their theses and projects in the digital age.
 - IRs are not a passing fad; they have been around for more than twenty years and scholars have demonstrated their effectiveness (Rieh, et al. 2007, 1–8).

Concerns about copyright protection were also addressed in the white paper. The student-author retains copyright of their work after they submit it, whether it is uploaded to the IR or just printed. By submitting their work to the IR, the student only grants to the institution the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible their work under the conditions they select in their deposit form. While it is commonly believed that open access prevents an author from publishing some or all of their work as a book or article, two studies have shown that most academic publishers have no problem publishing an article or book that was based on a work available in an IR (Ramirez et al. 2013, 368–370, 372–377; McMillan 2016, 111–112, 116–120). Most academic publishers almost never agree to directly publish a student thesis or dissertation without significant revision, making the final book or article a different work than what is in the repository. All scholarship builds on earlier scholarship, including the author’s earlier scholarship. In this case, the book or article they would publish is based, in part, on the student’s earlier project/thesis. Nonetheless, a good ETD repository, including Atla’s IR, allows institutions to set embargo policies and allows submitters who are concerned that open access publication may hinder future publication to select an embargo or a more restricted Institutional or Private access.

Finally, the white paper compared and contrasted Atla’s IR versus other options. While it is possible to build an ETD repository from scratch—as there are several free, open-source software platforms

to choose from—it would cost too much in terms of labor hours for our small (FTE 2) staff of librarians to set up and manage. On the other end, I presented quotes from other companies that manage IR platforms, but that would cost substantially more than Atla's. In support of Atla's IR, I noted that a colleague whose similarly small-sized theological library had adopted the same Hyku platform that Atla was proposing for their IR had nothing but high praise for how easy it worked. Building our ETD repository through Atla's IR also offered the prospect of greater discoverability, as patrons searching for theological works from another collection on Atla's IR would be more likely to come across our works.

Having obtained administration and faculty support and buy-in, MLTS adopted Atla's IR in late summer 2023. The platform was relatively easy to set up. Atla provided a template for a deposit agreement that made filling in our institution's name easy. Christy Karpinski, Atla's Digital Initiatives Librarian, provided a helpful user guide and responded to questions quickly and effectively. The only particular downside to Atla's IR has been that, unlike some other more expensive options, Atla's IR as it currently stands cannot guarantee long term preservation of digital works uploaded onto the platform, as it does not involve the more advanced aspects of digital preservation (extensive geographic redundancy, fixity checks, etc.). To put it another way, Atla's IR is currently an accessibility solution, not a long-term digital preservation solution. We at MLTS have managed this by retaining separate copies of all works on MLTS's secure internal server. Uploading a work on the IR nonetheless still functions as putting another egg in one more basket.

For branding, MLTS employs a part-time graphic designer who provided the website with a beautiful banner and a set of favicons. I was concerned that patrons would have a hard time remembering the IR's URL (meadville.ir.atla.com), as the acronym IR is not common knowledge amongst the general public, nor is Atla (sadly!) well known beyond the theological library profession; when I also realized that *Melodic* is a much more memorable acronym for MEadville LOmbard DIGital Commons, we rechristened our IR "Melodic," and created the URL of meadville.edu/melodic to redirect the user to meadville.ir.atla.com. The faculty and administration have found meadville.edu/melodic much easier to remember and are therefore better able to direct others to the website.

As a small institution, it would take years to populate the IR with only newly submitted works and make the costs worthwhile. Using the deposit agreement provided by Atla as a foundation, we drafted a deposit agreement for alumni and contacted them to request their permission to digitize and post their works on Melodic, adding that agreeing to do so was their decision, but that it would help their alma mater. More than a quarter of the alumni contacted responded, and almost all the responders enthusiastically granted their permission for public, open access publication. We also began digitizing and posting theses, dissertations, and projects that were out of copyright. We focused on digitizing and posting works from before 1923, including our extensive collection of hand-written student papers from the “Philanthropic Society” (Meadville Theological School’s nineteenth-century debate club) and “Anniversary Exercise” essays that were delivered aloud at the precursor to MLTS’s graduation ceremony, the Anniversary Exercises, from 1845 to the early twentieth century. These collections help support our narrative that MLTS has a long history of producing progressive theological scholarship. For more recent out-of-copyright works where the author is still alive, we have tried to respect and obtain the author’s permission before posting their work, although we have kept the language of our request and agreement open to pursue posting such works if we do not receive any response to repeated requests.

Overall, I have found subscribing to Atla’s IR one of the best decisions I have made as a new Library Director. It has helped us to modernize and advertise our institution. In adopting and managing an ETD repository, the library is now a more integral part of the thesis/project submission process. Previously, the library facilitated the printing and binding of two copies of each thesis or project—one for the library, the other for the student—and billed the students for the costs. Instead, we now spend that time engaged in information literacy work by ensuring that works adhere to Chicago Style and explaining copyright issues. Graduates like that they are no longer receiving one final bill for a printed copy that is not theirs. For students still interested in obtaining a printed and bound copy, we now direct them on how to obtain one themselves (for less money) via the Thesis on Demand company. In the future, we aim to continue expanding our collection of historical works. As Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir explained above, we have also found that graduating students need to be better informed of how open access can benefit them.

The silver lining to the problem is that we are information literacy professionals, and because of our new thesis and project submission process, we have identified a new opportunity to better instruct our students on issues of copyright and scholarly communication.

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Prepare Your Library for an ATS Accreditation Visit

Kelly Campbell, PhD, Associate Dean of Information Services, Senior Director of the Library, Columbia Theological Seminary

Andy Keck, Chief of Staff, Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University

ABSTRACT: When an institution is preparing for an ATS Accreditation visit, the library needs to prepare as well. This article provides a brief history of how the new Standards of Accreditation were created in 2020, including the philosophy guiding the standards. It outlines ways to prepare a library that covers Standard 6, which is the library standard. In the article, a reader learns how to collect data, write the narrative for Standard 6, and provide the evaluation team with conclusions and recommendations.

Welcome to the world of accreditation. Sometimes, accreditation has a bad reputation, or people groan when they hear the word accreditation, but accreditation intends to help ensure students receive a quality education. As educators and librarians, we invest in students and want them to grow during their time at our institutions. So, being a good partner with administration, faculty, and others in institutions regarding accreditation is an innovative and strategic move.

This article has three goals. The first goal is for you to be more acquainted with the *ATS Standards of Accreditation (2020)*, particularly Standard 6, which is the library standard. Second is to have concrete ideas on how to write for Standard 6. The final goal is to learn how accreditation can be simple and logical so you can be a resource and leader in your institution on this topic.

In 2000, ATS reviewed and revised its existing standards. The U.S. Department of Education requires accreditation agencies to review their standards on a regular basis. The old standards had grown exponentially due to the emergence of online education and

master's degrees within theological education. The old standards had ten basic standards, ten educational standards, and degree program standards (one for each of the degree programs the school offered). Therefore, the time was ripe to review and revise the ATS standards.

The ATS staff member who led this review was Dr. Debbie Creamer, a fellow librarian who left Iliff School of Theology to work at ATS.¹ This work was comprehensive and broad-reaching. Debbie and the librarian member of the ATS standards redevelopment task force, Mitzi Budde, came to an Atla Annual asking for input on the standards. At that point in time, no guarantee existed that a separate standard for libraries would be included in the new standards, or that libraries would be mentioned at all in the new standards. Partially due to the theological librarians' input, a separate library standard remained in the new standards. The result of this multi-year process was that ten new standards passed unanimously by the ATS membership.

The new standards are principle-based and focus on educational quality, accreditation clarity, and contextualized flexibility compared to the old standards, which were more prescriptive. However, neither the old standards and nor new standards are compliance-based on. For example, many regional accreditation agencies' standards are compliance-based, meaning when the accreditors come to visit, they mark items with either a *yes* or *no*. Institutions either follow the standards (are compliant), or not. In other words, an institution fits within a specific box, whether it is a stand-alone or embedded school.

The new standards seek in all ways to embody the ATS mission "to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public" (Association of Theological Schools, n.d.) and the ATS Commission purpose "to contribute to the enhancement and improvement of theological education through the accreditation of schools" (Association of Theological Schools, n.d.). Accreditation is a voluntary process through which schools mutually assure one another's educational quality with an eye toward ongoing improvement based on standards.

These standards articulate principles of quality for graduate theological education that all schools meet in various ways. The principles can be interpreted in a variety of ways. In other words, no one way exists to demonstrate how your institution is achieving

a principle. Each school has a right way in its unique context, and no one answer exists for over 240 ATS institutions.

Standard 6.10 states “the library provides environments conducive to learning and scholarly research, with appropriate agreements for its contracted or consortial resources” (Association of Theological Schools 2020, 10). This standard represents a principle of quality agreed upon as an element of theological education. However, how each institution achieves this principle of quality is left to the institution. The purpose of the narrative and evidence in the self-study is to demonstrate how a particular library in a specific institution achieves this principle of quality in its context. A standalone school library delivering only online degrees might provide a different environment conducive to learning compared to an embedded divinity school within a university structure. The blessing and freedom of principle-based standards is the ability of each institution to fulfill its mission within broad boundaries agreed upon by ATS members or their peers.

ATS accreditation is based on peer reviewers. Peers (the ATS membership) formed the committee to review the standards. Peers are members of all ATS evaluation teams. Peers are colleagues wanting each institution to deliver the highest quality of theological education in its particular context.

To help institutions grasp the new principle-based standards, the preamble to the new standards describes the purpose of accreditation well: “Accreditation is about quality assurance for various publics and ongoing improvement for theological schools, especially regarding student learning and formation” (Association of Theological Schools 2020, ii). Instead of skipping over this section, please take a few moments to read through it. Sections include standards and membership priorities, standards and their purposes, and standards and their interpretation. It is excellent!

Additionally, ATS created a helpful resource called *Standards of Accreditation (with Self-Study Ideas)* (Association of Theological Schools 2024). In the self-study ideas, they give examples of how to achieve the principle of quality based on context. When writing to this standard, refer to these ideas. These ideas are not the only way to provide evidence of how your institution is achieving the principles of quality—they are suggestions, not requirements.

Standard 6.1 lays out the library purpose and connection to the institutional mission: “The library has a clear statement that identifies its purpose and role in the school and the ways it contributes to achieving the school’s educational mission. The library’s purpose statement forms the foundation for evaluating library and information services” (Association of Theological Schools 2020, 10). A school might demonstrate its engagement with this standard by describing its purpose statement and explaining how (and by whom) it was developed, adopted, and distributed. It might explain how this statement connects with the school’s overall mission and the context of its stakeholders. The self-study might also discuss how this statement serves as a foundation for the library’s evaluation processes. If the library serves more than just the graduate theological school (e.g., a university library or a consortial library), the self-study might show how the statement helps the library give sufficient attention to the graduate theological program and the specific needs of its students and faculty.

A few points about assessment in relation to the library need to be made, especially regarding principle-based standards. You and your library staff need to develop the criteria by which the library will be evaluated, find ways to measure the achievement of those criteria, use the results to make further improvements, and begin the cycle again.

Perhaps it is obvious but still worth emphasizing: address the standard, even when (as in 6.10), it almost feels like two standards put together. One part is concerned with patron access to learning environments, while the second part is concerned with patron access to learning resources. Both the learning environments and learning resources could address both the physical and the virtual/digital. The point is to address the standard. Sometimes, an excellent way to do that is to use keywords and phrases from the standard as a way of assuring the reader that you have read and understood the standard. More importantly, if it is a compound standard with two or three aspects to it, make sure to address all of them.

Now, you are ready to demonstrate (provide evidence) how your library is achieving the standards when you write the self-study. What data do you have to provide proof? Libraries collect lots of data, but how much data is used and useful? One way to demonstrate evidence

is to match data collection to the ATS standards, which is a method learned and presented by Dr. Timothy Lincoln. Lincoln's yearly library survey questions matched the standards as articulated in Standard 6. (On your annual library survey of users, you can ask them if the library is providing an environment conducive to... and provide a five-point Likert scale.) Once this process is started, depending on where the library is in the accreditation cycle, two to three years or five years of data showing evidence of the library achieving this standard can be available—thus demonstrating evidence.

Additionally, provide open-ended questions on this annual library survey question. Ask users how the library offers this environment. Then, these user statements are utilized by adding them to the narrative of the self-study, demonstrating (again, providing evidence) that the library is achieving this standard within the context. Many libraries survey all students once a year, and faculty are surveyed every three years.

A second source of data is the ATS entering and exiting surveys called ESQ and GSQ. These surveys have one question divided into two parts related to the library already built into the primary survey. Additionally, an institution can petition ATS to add additional library questions to these surveys.

Standard 2.6 outlines the evaluation process for accreditation:

Evaluation is a simple, systematic, and sustained process that (a) identifies key educational and institutional outcomes (including learning outcomes for each degree program); (b) systematically and regularly gathers evidence related to each outcome (with a mixture of direct and indirect measures and quantitative and qualitative data); (c) engages appropriate stakeholders (especially faculty for educational outcomes) on a sustained basis to analyze and reflect upon how well the evidence indicates that each educational and institutional outcome is being achieved; and (d) uses those analyses and reflections for educational and institutional improvement. (Association of Theological Schools 2020, 2.)

Sometimes, schools get anxious over accreditation and fill their self-study with too much data, which is overwhelming to the visiting committee. Or the data points are not interconnected or do not show a change based on the data. Find the balance between too little and too much data—make it simple, systematic, and sustainable.

In the old standards, one standard was on diversity. In the new standards, diversity is woven throughout the standards so that diversity can be mentioned in almost all the standards. Sometimes, schools use the library as a touch point for diversity. But as the evaluation standards say, think about how the diversity of services and collections are related to student diversity, faculty diversity, and curriculum diversity. Be creative with your colleagues when writing the self-study. Do not let the library be the only place for diversity within your context. Diversity was of such significant value that the ATS membership voted on these standards with diversity woven throughout them, demonstrating that diversity is woven throughout the institution.

Institutions submit their self-study at least 90 days before the accreditation visit. The evaluation team receives the self-study. For a pro tip, if you are on an evaluation committee, start writing the evaluation committee's report before or while on the accreditation visit. The bulk of the report will be an evaluative summary of the self-study. The library section (addressing the standard and presenting the data) may be twenty pages; the evaluator will shrink it down to a page or two. You want to read the committee's comments on the library. Do not let administrators hide the committee report. Additionally, the committee report can be added to the institution's archives.

One of the critical parts of an Evaluation Team report is a one or two-page set of "committee recommendations." They are referenced as *recommendations* as it is up to the ATS Board of Commissioners to decide on the final actions.

- First, there is a recommendation to approve degrees and the length of accreditation. Ten years is the entire accreditation period, although it is becoming less common. However, for many years, it has been typical.
- Second, there is a recommendation to affirm several distinctive strengths. It is not uncommon to see libraries mentioned here.
- Third, there is a recommendation for issues that need special attention during the next period of accreditation. These are things to work on and that

- you will be asked about next time.
- Fourth, there are recommendations around required reports and, in some cases, focused visits or warnings. It is typical to have a couple of reports due back to ATS on items that are more troublesome or urgent than the next period of accreditation. This is a place of accountability: if you need a report back from ATS for the library, that gets the attention of your administration and board.
 - Less common, but not uncommon, is the recommendation for a focused visit—which often means an ATS staff member and perhaps one other peer evaluator will revisit your campus. Focused visits are not necessarily more urgent or serious, but they are for complex circumstances that make it difficult for a single written report to address.
 - Warnings and formal notations are more serious and registered publicly.

Most self-studies have used conclusions/recommendations in each area, including the library, to self-evaluate where improvements might be made. Use that wisely. The Evaluation Team may make good use of them in their report. In response to the library standard and sub-standards, the Evaluation Team will often make a “summary statement” that is based upon the self-study and interviews. Their responses may also include suggestions or things “to consider”—which can be summarized feedback from peers. However, these are ultimately suggestions. In the writing of the reports, the word *recommend* is reserved for items that are officially noted as action items needing attention. Anytime the word *recommends* appears, this triggers a required response.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The connection between ATS and Atla has existed for many years. As many know, Atla was born out of discussions within ATS, and there has traditionally been a good stable of Atla members who have served on evaluation committees. Historically, several Atla members have gone on to serve on the ATS staff, including Charles Willard, Bill Miller, Tom Tanner, Debbie Creamer, and Michael Hemenway.

The Pronoun Puzzle

A Beginner's Guide to Creating a Trans-Friendly Library

Suzanne Taylor (she/her), Information Technology Librarian, Mount St. Mary's University

Elli Cucksey (she/her), Head Librarian, Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University

ABSTRACT: Intended for any audience, this is a beginner's guide to inclusively interacting with transgender patrons in a library setting. We hope you will find information about creating a welcoming environment and providing resources to transgender persons. The session was meant to be an informational session regardless of institutional background or religious identity. The presenters relayed a selection of key terms and points of awareness relevant to the transgender community. We did not intend this to be a discussion on the validity or authenticity of identities, but rather a guide to interactions that allow library professionals to reduce library anxiety for a specific population.

INTRODUCTION

(Suzanne) We like to believe that libraries, especially our own, are welcoming spaces, with approachable staff and indispensable resources. In fact, most library workers strive ceaselessly to create such a space and to continue to improve upon it. Most library workers, especially those in academic libraries, are well aware that library users encounter multiple barriers to use, despite the fact that their library is expressly for the benefit of those same students. Of course, that is assuming that this given student enjoys status within majority groups on campus. For students who have been marginalized, the barriers to library use increase. While at this point in our collective understanding of academic libraries many library workers do not need convincing that anxiety and other fears get in the way of students using the resources that they have, in fact, already paid for, several of us may not be fully aware of the specific barriers to use affecting transgender and gender-expansive individuals.

In order to bring awareness to these barriers and suggest methods to begin breaking them down, we will suggest actionable ways to demonstrate to transgender library users that they are safe, valued, and welcome in the space. Having established that, we will introduce basic terminology and corrections to outdated or offensive terms. We acknowledge that each library exists in its own context and each library worker has varying degrees of control in terms of programming, displays, bathroom designations and other such decisions. Our goal then is to offer options that are accessible regardless of context.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIBRARY ANXIETY

At the risk of playing the broken record that is discussion about library anxiety, transgender folk, as well as all marginalized library users, experience library anxiety that is compounded by other societal inequities. While library anxiety can be present in any student or library user, some people will have more barriers to library use.

Since the term *library anxiety* was coined, it has undergone a few iterations. Here I want to note Kelleen Maluski and Symphony Bruce's work that notes that library anxiety is not a deficiency on the part of the user, but rather a systemic issue in academic institutions as a whole that keeps various minority groups from feeling a sense of belonging because the institution was not built for them (2022). These authors focus on the barriers that exist within the library and larger institution, rather than simply changing the feelings of the minority user. This view—the view that these barriers exist institution wide—can help recontextualize the need for trans-friendly libraries. Because “trans-spectrum students reported that anxiety and stress negatively influenced their academics at higher rates than their cisgender peers” (Rankin, Garvey, and Duran 2019, 13), the need for the library to be a place of safety and belonging becomes even more apparent. Today, we'll be using this term specifically to mean any anxiety an individual feels because of barriers or anxiety that becomes a barrier to library use.

Transgender individuals are dealing with a compounded library anxiety; they have to assess their actual safety (Bonner-Thompson, Mearns, and Hopkins 2021, 288) as well as their comfort with any given librarian, and within the library space. It might, in fact, be

helpful to imagine that a trans library user assumes a hostile environment until demonstrated otherwise rather than the other way around. We need to break down these barriers and put them on equal footing with library users in more privileged positions.

AN ATMOSPHERE OF BELONGING STARTS WITH SAFETY

Most librarians would agree that creating a space that is safe and welcoming is of the utmost importance; however when creating this space for transgender folks, consideration must be given both to the physical and emotional safety of those individuals. Safety is an issue that transgender people struggle with in nearly every physical location they inhabit. We must be cognizant of the cues we give in our libraries that indicate a safe or unsafe environment. Understanding and respect is crucial, and it is not enough to merely tolerate an individual's presence. We believe that each person deserves to be treated with respect and recognition of their humanity.

At each of our respective libraries we have varying degrees of control, and we recognize that there are unique limitations in each workplace for how many changes can be implemented (e.g., adding gender neutral bathrooms, having more inclusive materials, displaying said materials, etc.). Yet we can each decide to be the welcoming, safe person in our library space. Of course, it is not enough to believe that you are a safe person, but you also need to make that clear to your library users as well. In this next section, we will cover ways to do this.

SIGNALING SAFETY

In order to signal that you are a safe person in particular, you can choose to adopt specific practices. For example, while many people may be familiar with pins and stickers that have a person's pronouns listed, just as many people may be unaware that it is just as helpful, if not crucial, for a cisgendered person to wear them. For example, a cisgendered librarian who wears a pin that says "she/her" can help normalize the accessory, making others who choose to wear one seem less out of place. This also, of course, literally sends a

message or acceptance. Later on in the presentation, Elli will cover introducing yourself using your pronouns.

I want to touch on the following two suggestions for those who are able to do so. These are steps taken to mitigate harm for gender expansive individuals. While this presentation is meant to focus on terminology and interaction with the community, I would be remiss to ignore a few things that might seem passive to us but can cause active harm.

While this could be an entire presentation on its own, consider changing your metadata and subject headings to less harmful language (Watson et al. 2023). For example, “transsexuals” is not the word the community of transgender folks use to describe themselves, yet it is still listed as a Narrower Term under the “Transgender” Library of Congress Subject Heading (Library of Congress, n.d.; Roberto 2011, 58). It can be incredibly hurtful to use this word since, as of 2024, it is generally used in a derogatory sense. (We include more information on metadata and subject headings in our resources list.)

Another action that you can take, which again is its own presentation, is weeding harmful books on the topic of transgender and gender expansive people (Currier and White 2019, 9–10). We know that this is a sensitive topic at a theological librarianship conference, so we will not delve any deeper. However, resources on this will also be available by scanning the QR code at the end of the presentation.

INTRODUCTION TO GENDER EXPANSIVENESS/VARIETY

(Elli) For the purposes of this brief discussion, let us agree on a few things, regardless of ideology. First, let’s accept that it is our wish to make our resources available to those to whom our institution grants access in the easiest, most comfortable manner possible. We wish to make each of these individuals as comfortable as possible to allow them to complete the work that they have set out to do with the fewest possible barriers. Second, we might also agree that, to that end, we will assume a person is the gender that they tell you they are, regardless of what we might believe about gender from a social or religious perspective. If I tell you that I am a woman, I expect the librarian (or the fast-food server, or the grocery cashier, or even the dentist) to, at minimum, respectfully not question the fact

in my presence. A trans person has the right to expect the same. This is not about us changing your mind about the validity of another's gender expression, but neither is it about you changing the mind of that individual.

In addition to accepting what we are told about a person's gender or pronouns, we all need to agree that we don't know anything, nor do we need to know anything about a person's sexual preferences based on their gender expression. You might assume that a transperson is "gay," but what are you really assuming? And do you need to know anything about who this person is attracted to so you can help them access the resources in your library?

SOME VOCABULARY TO NOTE

A few vocabulary notes: *AFAB* and *AMAB* to start. The most important thing about these terms is that you probably don't need to use them in relation to a patron in your library. They simply mean "Assigned Female at Birth" or "Assigned Male at Birth." Since we all know that these assignments are determined based on the genitalia of the newborn, it's almost always irrelevant in conversation in the library. Individuals may choose to disclose this, but since it's literally identifying the genitalia one was born with, it's a bit creepy to talk about.

Some other vocabulary that you should steer clear of in your interactions would be terms like *cross-dresser* or *transvestite*. *Transvestite* is just a word we don't use anymore due to its long use as a negative term, and *cross-dressing* is not the same thing as *transitioning* one's gender.

More vocabulary that you should be familiar with would include terms like *cisgender* and *transgender*. You may have come to believe that *cisgender* is some kind of slur, and I hope that you will not believe that. It was never intended as anything other than a way to be clear in language. If there are people who have transitioned their gender, there are people who have not, who are still living and experiencing life as the gender they were assigned at birth—and that is described as *cisgender*. *Transgender*, then is just an adjective to describe a person who has transitioned their gender. Let's remember that we should never refer to someone as "a transgender" or

“transgendered.” Often those of us who have many friends in this community have come to understand that this is a negative or hurtful thing to say without giving real thought to why, so when we try to explain it to folks who are just being introduced to these concepts, we stumble a bit. The best and most succinct explanation I’ve found is that by referring to someone as “a transgender,” you are simply turning a descriptive adjective into a defining noun. While a trans person may be more defined by their gender than a cis person, it is by no means the defining characteristic of that person. They are people with many other defining characteristics. I personally know pastors, parents, teachers, librarians, spouses, grandparents, artists, and musicians who would much rather be defined by these roles than their gender, or the fact that they have socially transitioned their gender at some point in their past.

BEYOND THE BINARY

So far, we’ve talked about men and women—the binary of gender. There is more than that. Some folks understand themselves to be a gender that doesn’t match either of those, or some combination of those, or that they move between those. I’m not here to help you understand that. I don’t understand that any more than I can understand being a man. We just accept that the truth about a person’s gender is what that person understands it to be. Two helpful terms for these people are *nonbinary* and *agender*. Sometimes you might hear *enby*, which is just the pronunciation of “NB” for nonbinary. There are so many different ways that these individuals might present their gender identification, or not—and in the end, none of that is relevant to providing library services. It is of note that these are the largest group of people using they/them for single pronouns, and that brings us to the meat of our session...

THOSE PESKY PRONOUNS

I have been putting my pronouns on my email signature and name tags and zoom identifiers for about a decade now. There are a few reasons for that. I am not interested in having a fight with folks who do not do this. If you feel strongly that you don’t want to share your pronouns, no one is going to make you. You need to know that

there are *your* reasons for not sharing, and there are many other reasons a person might not want to share. I will not assume that I know your reasons. I share mine because I have watched someone I love navigate a world where no one ever asked for pronouns, and they felt uncomfortable bringing it up, and I wanted to contribute to changing the norm. By adding my pronouns, I have helped to normalize it being in signatures, even though I am rarely misgendered by the pronouns people assume for me. Now, someone who might have pronouns that are not what most would assume can add theirs to a signature, or a nametag, or simply mention them in introduction, and it's just a bit less awkward.

There's another layer to this. In my professional life, I also choose not to use a gendered honorific whenever possible. I am not ordained, nor do I hold a doctorate degree. Therefore, the most socially appropriate honorific for me is *Mrs.* I do not feel it is necessary to be listed anywhere with that honorific which translates to "married woman" before my name. Neither my gender nor my marital status are even remotely relevant when you are looking for the librarian at Trinity. I could choose to use *Mx.* (pronounced "mix"); however, I feel like that is making a different statement, and since I don't have claim to a non-binary identity, I will not appropriate that unnecessarily.

So, how do I ask for pronouns? The easiest way is with a smile. I usually just mention that I use she/her, and then just say, "can I ask yours?" If someone is uncomfortable stating, or says that they don't use pronouns, just don't use any pronouns for them. It's sometimes awkward, but it's not that hard. And it gets easier with practice. Instead of asking my student worker to "help Jack get his books from the hold shelf." I might say, "help Jack to get *some* books from the hold shelf." Speak slowly and think. Practice helps.

MISTAKES

We all make mistakes! Quickly correct yourself and move on.

You *will* mess up. Everyone does. I have been doing this with friends and family members for many years. You *will* slip. Nobody cares. The most important thing is the effort. Don't make a big deal, don't trip over yourself in apologies. Correct yourself and move on. If you are corrected by someone else, restate your sentence correctly

and go on; a quick thank-you for the correction maybe. That's it. By not making a bigger deal out of it, you allow the person to move on, too. They don't want their whole interaction with the librarian to be about the tense correction of pronouns.

For most of us the most difficult pronoun set to adopt is *they/them* for the single person. I'm not here to tell you this is simple or debate the correctness of it. There are hundreds of years of usage, and you have been doing it your whole life when nobody drew attention to it. I've been doing it throughout this presentation, and nobody has batted an eye. I'll give you the sentence that will prove it:

"Look, someone left their water bottle in here from the last session and I hope they remember this is where they had it last."

Nothing about that sentence sounds weird to you unless I put a name in the place of "someone."

"Look, Vance left their water bottle in here from the last session and I hope they remember this is where they had it last."

Now, it sounds funny to you because you've never known Vance to have any other pronouns than he/him. But when you didn't know who the person is, it sounds fine, right? And it's almost certainly just a single person who owns a water bottle, right? Really, though, it isn't that you didn't know *who*, it's that you didn't know the *gender* of the unknown person, because you can't tell a person's gender by a water bottle. People who use *they/them* are kind of telling you the same thing. You don't have the information to determine how they might fit into one of just two categories. Whether you believe that is possible or not isn't relevant, because you can only know what gender they are by what they tell you; so we're going to use *they/them* because they asked us to, and there's really nothing else for us to concern ourselves with.

I say all of this, and I sound confident, and I am. But again, you will mess this one up. I have a very loved one in my daily life, and I still mess it up from time to time. It's not hurtful to make a mistake. It's only an offense if you never try. If you are corrected and then can't hold the thought through the next sentence, then it looks like you didn't try. Therefore, you are making a statement. If you want to make that statement, fine, but now you've violated our first

agreement about how we all want to make our patrons comfortable in our library spaces.

CONCLUDING NOTES

As library workers, we want to promote welcoming environments. However, we also know we can't change everything overnight or control our entire institutions. Focus on actionable items like making a habit of introducing yourself using your own pronouns; make sure your collections and metadata do not have harmful or outdated terms. Recognize that learning new things can take time and practice, and that making mistakes is normal. What is most important is that you show your library users that they are valued and respected.

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Pruning

Lessons The Literature Did Not Teach Me

Oliver Schulz, Technical Services Librarian, Colorado Christian University

ABSTRACT: This paper presents practical lessons that I learned while preparing, conducting, and reviewing a significant pruning project at Colorado Christian University (CCU) between 2018 and 2024. I will first share some details about CCU and its library collection, provide a definition of “pruning,” and then share practical lessons I learned in the past few years that I did not see discussed while reviewing publications dealing with library pruning. These lessons learned are about how to better prepare for such a project, how to formulate evaluation criteria, how to use the library’s integrated library system and online public access catalog; they also concern workflow, better communication, post-project lessons (and potential future plans), and what should not be repeated by anybody: foolish lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Collection evaluation and pruning are standard practices among libraries. One might wonder how this topic applies more specifically to theological libraries and librarians. It is probably fair to say that theological librarians and libraries are often reluctant to prune their collections for at least two reasons: a) theological resources usually have a much longer shelf-life than resources in other subject matters; and b) theological libraries often lack adequate staffing, which discourages large-scale evaluation and pruning projects. This paper is borne out of such a context and will give insights into how you can complete such a project successfully.

BACKGROUND OF COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Colorado Christian University is a non-denominational evangelical school that traces its history to the founding of the Denver Bible Institute in 1914. Now located in Lakewood, Colorado, CCU

has a student FTE of over 7,200 divided between the College of Undergraduate Studies (on-campus students), the College of Adults and Graduate Studies (primarily online students), and the CCU Academy (online dual credit, dual enrollment).

The Clifton Fowler Library, named after the founder of the Denver Bible Institute, has four full-time library faculty (Director of Library Services, Instruction & Outreach Librarian, Web Technologies Librarian, and Technical Services Librarian), and one and a half full-time library staff (Library Service Coordinator, Library Associate). As of April 2024, the Library's collection includes more than 28,000 physical volumes, 740,000 electronic volumes, 19,000 audio books, 103,000 audio recordings, and 68,000 video recordings; the audio books, audio and video recordings are primarily online resources.

In 2018, the librarians at CCU made two significant decisions: first, we shifted primary funding for resources from print to electronic since the majority of CCU's students are not able to access physical resources. Second, the physical collection needed a thorough evaluation because (a) many of these resources were either outdated and/or not used, and (b) the building that housed the library would sooner or later be torn down and rebuilt. Removing unnecessary titles from the collection would reduce the work of moving the collection to a temporary location and back into the new building. Thus, I started preparations for the evaluation of the collections in 2018 and continued the project (with interruptions) until the spring of 2024.

DEFINITIONS

The library literature provides several options to describe the removal of resources from a collection. Common terms include *weeding*, *retiring*, *deselecting*, or *deaccessioning*. All these terms describe the same general practice: resources are moved from a collection of the library to (a) a less prominent collection (e.g., from Reference to Circulation), (b) to a less prominent location (e.g., to an off-campus location), or (c) to be sold, gifted, recycled, or exchanged for another resource or credit.

While those may be the most common terms used for removing titles from a library collection, *deselecting* and *deaccessioning* are technical and will not be clear to those outside the library. *Retiring* is

a good term to describe this kind of project, but most people associate retiring with something other than libraries. I believe that *weeding* is a poor choice of words, for it implies that the resource was always of inferior quality, which is (hopefully) inaccurate for most titles. Further, if one takes the gardening comparison further, one might conclude that these poor-quality resources multiply on their own. I therefore prefer to speak of *pruning* the collection. The term, I believe, accurately describes the removal of a branch (book) that is no longer useful or hinders the growth of the plant (i.e., hinders the full usefulness of the collection), while at the same time indicating that the branch (book) was once productive and useful.

THE LESSONS LEARNED

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss reasons why librarians do and do not prune, pruning criteria such as MUSTIE, or how to plan for such a project. There is an abundance of literature that discusses these points at length. Neither will I discuss CCU's specific reasons for evaluating and pruning the collection, since such reasons differ according to context. Instead, this article will discuss the lessons I learned preparing, conducting, and completing a pruning project—lessons that I had not learned even after consulting more than twenty-five resources discussing such projects in preparation for this one.

PROJECT PREPARATION LESSONS

Gather Statistics

LESSON: GATHER AS MANY MEANINGFUL STATISTICS AS POSSIBLE.

It is important to gather significant statistics about the collection before evaluating the first title. Since different libraries may need different statistics, it is important to gather detailed information to draw meaningful conclusions at the end of the project. For this project, I gathered the number of resources in every class and sub-class of the Library of Congress Classification schedule. This information allowed me to not only have a good overview of the library's current holdings, but by using the same parameters after the project, the data allowed me to see which area of the collection was most affected by the evaluation.

Save the Search Queries

LESSON: SAVE ALL SEARCH QUERIES YOU USE TO GATHER STATISTICS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT SO YOU CAN USE IDENTICAL QUERIES AT THE END OF THE PROJECT.

As with the previous point: conduct the pre- and post-data collection using identical methods and parameters. The integrated library system (ILS) for the CCU Library is Sierra, and I made it a point to document the search and data export perimeters (in our case, a JSON search query) in my documentation. It makes no sense to compare data that was collected using different methods, for the data will likely reveal changes that make as much sense as this example illustrates: “At the beginning of the sale, we had 100 apples, and at the end of the sale we had 5 pounds of apples left.” Further, if the pruning project overlaps with a library’s migration to a new ILS, it is probably best to run a first pre-project report before the evaluation begins, run a first post-project report the day before the implementation, run a second pre-project report on the first day after the implementation, and a second post-project report once the project is completed. This will help secure the integrity of the data.

Make Review of the Project Part of the Project

LESSON: PLAN TO REVIEW THE PROJECT WHILE IT IS IN PROGRESS AND AFTER IT IS COMPLETED.

A project review can be an invaluable resource for future projects. It took me less than a week to realize that I was learning new things about the project every day, and I decided to start taking notes about what was and what was not going well. This also led me to sit down with colleagues to learn what lessons they were learning. This, in turn, led to changes in the workflow and clarifications in the documentation and instructions. Prior to any project, create a dedicated blank document to record lessons you have learned that day or week, set up appointments with colleagues one week into the project to gain insights, and implement the feedback you receive.

EVALUATION CRITERIA LESSONS

Create Policies for “Special Books”

LESSON: TRY TO THINK OF TITLES THAT MAY NEED MORE OR LESS ATTENTION IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS.

One insight I had very quickly was that I had not previously considered certain titles that were in the library's collection. The type of "special books" will differ from library to library, but for an academic library such as CCU's, I decided that we either keep or prune certain series based on their academic quality. For example, I removed titles that were part of "Time-Life Books" or "Barnes & Noble" series. However, there were other series that were not as easy to decide. I ultimately developed the policy to retain those volumes of academic series that showed a history of usage while pruning those volumes of the same series that showed little to no usage. I made exceptions when we had a complete or near complete run of a series.

I encountered a similar problem with sets. These included Bible commentary sets as well as sets such as the Scribner Writers Series. When I encountered such sets, I developed the policy to keep all volumes if (a) we had a complete or near complete set, and (b) some volumes of the set had a history of usage. On the other hand, if the set was very incomplete and it was unlikely that CCU would add the missing volumes, I pruned those volumes that had not shown usage.

Create Evaluation Policies Based on Keywords in Title

LESSON: DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF TITLES YOU EVALUATE, THINK OF KEYWORDS IN TITLES THAT MAY HELP YOU ACCELERATE YOUR EVALUATION PROCESS.

Within a few months of starting the project, I came across an article that helped me in my evaluation process. Arbeeny and Chittenden (2014) argued that many titles can be evaluated at high speed by merely looking at their titles: any older publications that included words such as *modern*, *today*, *new*, *contemporary*, *emergent*, or *current* are most likely out of date and can be pruned without much additional evaluation.

WORKFLOW LESSONS

The workflow for this project was likely very similar to projects conducted by others: (1) I used the ILS to create various lists of titles

that were to be evaluated and gave those to the student employees; (2) the student employees then pulled those books and placed them in my office on shelves and book carts; (3) I evaluated the titles and decided if a title was to be kept or pruned; (4) I removed all titles from the ILS and OCLC holdings while the students reshelved titles that we kept; (5) I kept all completed pages of titles that I evaluated in my office for record-keeping and to answer potential questions.

Pay Attention to the Pilot Project

LESSON: CONDUCT A PILOT PROJECT TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND TAKE THE TIME TO IMPLEMENT ITS LESSONS.

I purposefully created a pilot project that involved all individuals involved: the student employees and their supervisor, some colleagues, and myself. The pilot project did help me clarify some of the instructions I had given in writing to the student employees; however, there were other lessons that I did not implement because I was too eager to get the project started. So, while I learned many lessons, I did not implement enough changes based on those lessons. This would cost me time and energy (as some of the following points will show).

Anticipate Delays

LESSON: BE LIBERAL IN YOUR PROJECT TIMELINE IN CASE THERE ARE UNFORESEEN DELAYS.

At the beginning of the project, I estimated that I could evaluate approximately 300 titles every day. As I gathered data from months of evaluation, I had completed only about 150 titles per day when I actively worked on the project.

There were several bottlenecks that I had not considered in my initial estimation. One was that student employees were sometimes not available or were busy with other projects. Computer, internet, ILS problems, other responsibilities, and change of locations (most of the collection moved to the temporary off-campus location in the middle of the project) all further slowed the project's pace. Evaluating a collection carefully takes time, and you should therefore be liberal in how much time you plan to take to complete it.

Evaluate Using Your Hands

LESSON: USE MORE THAN ONE SENSE TO GAUGE THE VALUE OF A TITLE YOU ARE EVALUATING.

Usage statistics are one of the most common and important indicators of a title's worth in a library's collection. When I created the lists of titles to be evaluated, I included two indicators: the number of total checkouts and the last time a title had been checked in. However, there is a real problem evaluating titles purely by looking at statistics in a spreadsheet: as I looked at the hundreds of lines of resources, the titles and authors start to blur into a mass of letters and numbers.

Right from the start of the project, I was committed to touching every resource I was evaluating. While this slows down the project, it allowed me to evaluate each title individually, look at the title and author in larger (than the spreadsheet) font, read the author's credentials, the endorsements, investigate if a new edition was available, and evaluate the physical condition of the resource. Even if the resource appears not to be useful anymore, it once cost the institution or a donor money, and it is worth the investment of your time to give it a fair and careful evaluation.

Sort Evaluated Books Systematically

LESSON 1: CREATE CATEGORIES FOR EVALUATED TITLES AND SORT THEM IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE (TO YOU).

I found it helpful to evaluate a title and then place it within a certain space on my desk and in a certain way. Thus, all titles that I needed to scan after the evaluation was completed for the day were placed on my desk with the barcode facing up. Titles that would go into the library's book sale were placed horizontally with the barcode up and facing away from me. Titles that we shipped to a used book vendor were placed vertically with the barcode facing up. Books that needed to be reshelved were placed horizontally with the barcode down. Books that needed to be checked-in and checked-out again (to create usage; more about that below) were placed horizontally with the barcode facing up and towards me, etc. Image 1 shows how I arranged the books on my desk; note how I placed the books and the barcodes.



Image 1: Books placed systematically on desk

Lesson 2: Place evaluated titles in places that make it easy on you and your back.

Not all books are created equal: some are heavier than others. Pruned books no longer needed to be in a certain order, and I therefore made it a habit to place the heaviest titles on the top shelf of a cart, the shelf that was easiest for me to reach. Image 2 shows that all smaller and lighter books are on the bottom two shelves, while all heavier books are on the top shelf. This practice does not mean that only heavy books go on the top shelf—it means that all heavy books are on that easy-to-reach shelf, while smaller books fill out the empty space.



Image 2: Books placed systematically on cart

Protect Your Shipping Supplies

LESSON 1: DO NOT LET SHIPPING SUPPLIES DISAPPEAR FOR NON-LIBRARY BUSINESS.

For this project, the CCU library used Better World Books (BWB) to dispose of all titles that we pruned and did not sell in the library's book sale. BWB provides empty shipping boxes (usually forty at a time) and organizes the shipping of those boxes. The problem we encountered was that boxes started to disappear; library employees used them to move or store both personal and library materials. Thus, the project manager should provide clear communication that boxes are not to be used for any other purposes (and that they are

not the library's property). Obviously, the same is true for all other shipping supplies as well.

LESSON 2: ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH BOXES AND OTHER SHIPPING SUPPLIES AT HAND.

We quickly made it a habit that when we started the last set of 40 BWB boxes, we ordered another set, which would take one to two weeks to arrive. This way, we always had enough boxes available to box up pruned titles. We applied the same principle to other supplies such as packing tape, shrink wrap (for preparing pallets of boxes), permanent markers, etc. Unless the project nears its end, ensure that you always have more than enough supplies at hand.

Take Regular Breaks from the Project

LESSON: MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO NOT EVALUATE BOOKS FOR AN ENTIRE DAY WITHOUT BREAKS.

I previously mentioned that you should take your time evaluating each book by using more than one sense, i.e., do not merely look at data on spreadsheets, but touch the physical book. This lesson is not merely a reminder of this key point. Rather, you must (purposefully) plan for time away from the project.

There is a real chance that you will catch the bug I call “evaluation-monotony.” Just as the data on a spreadsheet can easily become overwhelming and you cannot see the trees because of the forest, looking at 100-plus books without any interruption can easily cause you to lose concentration as books start to look alike, which will cause you to make errors in your evaluation. Plan ahead and balance your workday with other (smaller) projects that interrupt the evaluation. You might want to walk around the library and check if patrons need help, eat lunch, or talk to a colleague for a few minutes about this or another project. Every person will work differently and will reach the point of evaluation-monotony at different times. Knowing yourself and planning ahead can help.

Ensure That the Item Is Clear to Be Withdrawn

LESSON: CHECK THE STATUS OF THE TITLE BEFORE YOU REMOVE IT FROM THE COLLECTION.

If a title has not seen usage for many years, one can assume that it is no longer useful in the eyes of the library's users. However, that assumption is just that ... an assumption. Library patrons may not have used it because the online public access catalog (OPAC) lists the item as lost, checked out, on the repair shelf, out for binding, etc. It is possible the student employee pulled the title from the shelf for evaluation two days ago, and yesterday a patron placed a hold on the title. Before you withdraw the title from the library's ILS, before you delete your holdings record from OCLC, before you cross out the barcode, it is imperative that you check the status of the resource to ensure that it is clear to be removed from the collection.

Anticipate Technical, Software, or Power Problems

LESSON: BE PREPARED WHEN UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS DELAY THE EVALUATION PROJECT.

First, save your files and records consistently, constantly, and to a safe place—your computer's local hard drive is not a safe place. Save those files to a network or to the cloud and do so every time you take a short break, go to the bathroom, or eat lunch. Power or network outages usually happen at (what we perceive to be) the worst possible time. Reduce the risk of losing data and/or reduce the amount of data you might lose by backing up relevant information and data often.

ILS LESSONS

Libraries use a variety of integrated library systems, and obviously each will have its strengths and weaknesses. It is up to the librarian to learn which weaknesses to bypass or overcome. At the time of this project, the CCU Library was using III Sierra.

Determine the Data Needed for Good Record-Keeping

LESSON: BEFORE BEGINNING THE PROJECT, ENSURE THAT YOU KNOW ALL THE DATA YOU WISH TO COLLECT TO PRODUCE RECORDS OF YOUR PRUNING.

I like keeping detailed records. I find comfort in the fact that I know which titles I have added or removed at what point of time and for what reasons. As librarians, we are responsible for justifying our decisions to our funding agencies, and data can make that task easier.

When I started the project, I included the following data in my record-keeping of pruned titles:

- Date Pruned
- Title of Work
- Author(s) or Editor(s)
- ISBN or ISSN
- Publication Date
- Call Number
- Internal Note
- Status (if title was considered lost, checked out, etc.)
- Date of Last Check-in
- Total Number of Checkouts
- Barcode

As I progressed, I also included the OCLC number/BIBID in my records.

Produce Clean Data of Pruned Titles

LESSON: USE THE PILOT PROJECT TO INVESTIGATE AND OVERCOME ANY DATA EXPORT PROBLEMS OF YOUR ILS.

I consistently encountered problems exporting data from Sierra into a spreadsheet. While advanced users may have solutions, I was never able to overcome the fact that data spilled into multiple columns, thus creating cleanup work for me. This was particularly true for the title column, which (see image 3) spilled data into the next one or two columns. I should have noticed this problem during the Pilot Project, and I should have tried to find ways to solve this problem prior to beginning the main part of the project. Since the title caused the most problems, I could have (and ultimately did) shift the order of the exports so that the title information was in the

final column. This allowed for much cleaner data in the rest of the spreadsheet. I could then re-arrange the title data into the desirable column without causing additional work.

Date Pruned	CALL #(ITEM)	VOLUME	TITLE	BARCODE	STATUS	008 Date	INT. NOTE	TOT CHECKOUT	ISBN/ISSN	SUBJECT
3/5/2019	AZ 221 P4 1976		History of classical scholarship from 1300 to 18	441092000125681	441E-14	1976	Horizon_CKOs_0	0		Learning an
3/5/2019	AZ 203 O73		The Organization of knowledge in modern Ame	1868-1920 / edited		1979	Horizon_CJ	0		K
3/5/2019	AZ 221 P4 1968		History of classical scholarship from the begini	441092000058375		1968	Horizon_CKOs_0	0	0198143427 63-	Learning an
3/5/2019	B 105 HS B44		Being human in a technological age / collected	441092000137249		1979	Horizon_CKOs_1 La	0	0821403990082144	Humanism. I
3/5/2019	B 105 A35 A93 1989		Practical reasoning / Robert Audi.	441092000186672		1989	Horizon_CKOs_0	0	415033748 Act	Philosc
3/5/2019	B 105 W3 W37 2003		War and peace : a reader / edited by Jeff Astley	David Brown and Ann	3.4213E-13			2003	Horizon_CKOs_3	

Image 3: Screenshot of Data Export

LESSON: YOU WILL COME ACROSS TITLES YOU THINK ARE STILL VALUABLE TO THE COLLECTION, I.E., TITLES THAT SHOULD RECEIVE A "SECOND CHANCE." IN THOSE SITUATIONS, YOU CAN CHECK-OUT AND CHECK-IN THE TITLE TO CREATE ARTIFICIAL CIRCULATION, I.E., THE TITLE IS PROTECTED FROM BEING PRUNED IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

Even though usage statistics should never be the sole data point for collection management decisions, usage remains a key data point in library evaluations. Sometimes patrons may not have used a resource for years, and yet the title is still a standard in its field or is still helpful in some circumstances. In many cases, such titles should remain in the collection for a few more years to give them another opportunity to be used by library patrons. I created an artificial circulation by checking the title out to myself and immediately back in. The purpose of this was to remove the title from evaluation lists for the next few years without protecting it for an indefinite period, i.e., if the title does not receive additional usage in the future, we will likely prune it during a future collection evaluation.

Create Note Fields in Item Records

LESSON: IF YOUR ILS ALLOWS, YOU SHOULD CREATE NOTES IN THE ITEM RECORDS THAT INFORM FUTURE EVALUATION/PRUNING EFFORTS.

The CCU Library has a longstanding tradition of adding notes to item records to identify titles that were requested by CCU professors or administrators. I have a template for that note, which includes the faculty member's name and school. At any future evaluation, the note will help librarians gain valuable information why the title

was added in the first place and will likely delay its removal if the professor is still at the university.

Other notes may be equally helpful. Librarians evaluating the collection in the future can gain good insight if the item record indicates that the title is a “classic” in the field, or if librarians add a note that the title should remain in the collection until a certain year (e.g., “Do not prune until 2030.”).

OPAC LESSONS: FIND SHORTCUTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE

There are many different OPAC/discovery systems available to libraries, and each will have its own strengths and weaknesses. Librarians must learn to use any strengths to their advantage and alleviate any weaknesses to the best of their abilities. CCU uses Pika (www.ccu.edu/library), a system based on VuFind.

Lesson: Evaluate your workflow to see if shortcuts are available via the OPAC, browser, etc.

My workflow included scanning every item’s barcode. Most of the time, I also clicked on the hyperlink of every subject heading to investigate our other holdings in the title’s subject area. Over time, I realized that I could significantly increase the speed of evaluation by implementing three minor changes:

First, I would not click on a subject hyperlink and wait for a new page to load. Instead, I would open a new tab (“Open Link in New Tab” in Mozilla Firefox), so that I could click on additional subject links while this and other tabs were loading.

Second, I realized that instead of right-clicking on the hyperlink link with the mouse button and then using another mouse-click on “Open Link in New Tab,” I could mouse right-click on the subject hyperlink and then use the “T” key on the keyboard (underlined and highlighted in the Image 4) to execute the same command to “Open Link in New Tab.” While Chrome does not have this open, Firefox does!

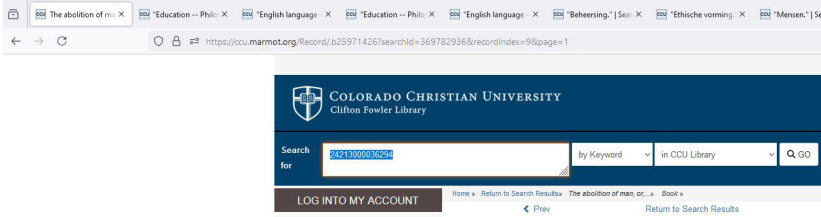


Image 4: Screenshot of Open New Tab (Firefox)

Third, after I had opened the tabs for the title's subject(s), I had to scroll to the top of the page to access those tabs. I made it a habit to select/highlight barcode in the search field when I reached the top of the page and then investigate the recently opened tabs. Once I closed the additional tabs, the search field would already be selected, i.e., all I had to do is scan the next book's barcode into the search field.

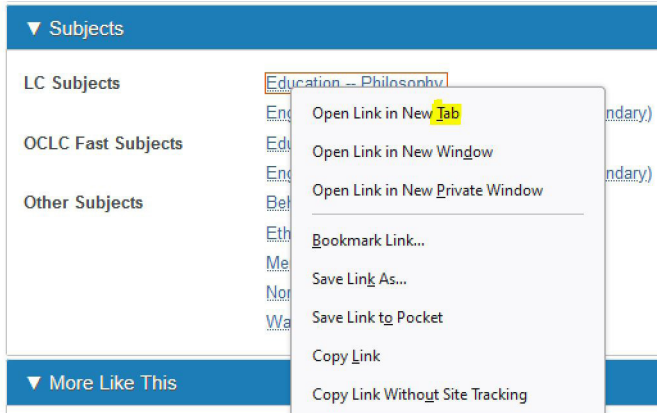


Image 5: Screenshot of highlighted barcode for next scan

The key is to look for and implement these kinds of shortcuts as they are available in your context and fit them into your workflow.

COMMUNICATION LESSONS

Look and Ask for Treasures

LESSON: IF YOU NEED SOMETHING, ASK (THE RIGHT PEOPLE) FOR IT.

We have all heard the saying, “One person’s trash is another person’s treasure.” The CCU librarians decided to ship pruned titles to BWB on pallets. However, the only place we could find them was behind the cafeteria. So, I went to the director of the cafeteria and asked if

I could periodically take one or two. He was delighted to get rid of them. All it took was to ask the right person the right question. Ask for those “treasures;” the worst thing that can happen is that your request is denied.

Be the Squeaky Wheel

LESSON: IF YOU NEED SOMETHING AND THE INITIAL ANSWER WAS NOT THE ONE YOU NEEDED, KEEP ASKING.

Since the CCU’s evaluation process took approximately six years, it is not surprising that things changed. The most notable change was that most books were moved to an off-campus facility. This one change entailed a lot of smaller changes: there were fewer book carts to place/store books on; student employees were usually not available; and there was no internet connection at the facility.

One way to respond to these changes was to just give up and call the project “completed.” However, when there is a will, there usually is a way. Our initial request to install internet access was denied because it would take too much time to get it installed. For many months, I used my cell phone’s hotspot to connect to both our ILS and OPAC, which was problematic on most days. After repeated attempts, CCU’s IT department finally installed internet. My argument was quite simple: “I cannot do my work properly without proper internet access.” If it is a reasonable work-related request, do not give up; keep asking ... i.e., squeaking.

Keep Stakeholders Informed

LESSON: COMMUNICATION MUST NOT BE A ONE-TIME DEAL; KEEP PEOPLE INFORMED AS THE PROJECT PROGRESSES.

It may be true that librarians often complete projects without anyone outside of the library noticing their efforts. However, when evaluating and pruning a collection, people tend to start paying attention. It is therefore important to keep the administration, faculty, colleagues, staff, students, and other stakeholders informed about the project before you start it.

Remember that communication channels can break down easily. In the case of CCU, the Dean of the Library informed the administration and other deans about the upcoming project; the deans were

supposed to inform their respective faculty. This, however, did not always happen, and some faculty needed additional information. On the one hand, I was thrilled for faculty to come to my office and ask good questions; on the other hand, I was disappointed that some faculty more or less openly accused me of weakening the collection. Librarians have a responsibility to properly inform their library's stakeholders. Different libraries may find different channels to communicate; some may find a weekly or monthly newsletter useful; others may design a LibGuide or a Google Doc/Google Sheet, etc.

Patiently Instruct Those Who Work with You

LESSON: SUPPLY CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS AND BE WILLING TO REVISE THEM TO PROVIDE EVEN GREATER CLARITY.

No librarian would purposefully provide unclear instructions to their colleagues or student employees. However, just because instructions seem clear to me does not mean that they are clear to others. Amazingly, my “perfect” instructions left room for many types of errors. Student employees regularly did not place books in proper order, slowing down the evaluation process. (It is easier to evaluate one hundred books on C.S. Lewis if I evaluate them one after another than having to evaluate them one at a time spread throughout thousands of other titles.) They also placed the books in several ways on the shelves: correctly with the spine facing out, but also upside down or the spine facing the wall. BWB boxes disappeared from the library, and those the student employees boxed with library books were often not filled well. Some student employees were not aware that this was an ongoing project and returned to their regular duties after a few weeks.

Besides updating the written instructions for everybody, I started to have one-on-one meetings with colleagues and student employees. This was not always easy since my schedule did not overlap with all of them. Again, the Pilot Project should have revealed these weaknesses. However, there are additional solutions: librarians can communicate with individuals they usually do not see via a Wiki, Google Doc, or LibGuide.

Signage

LESSONS: MAKE YOUR SIGNS CLEAR—CRYSTAL CLEAR!

Within a week or two, I realized that my initial signs for student employees were not clear. One initial sign read, “Pulled from Circulation for Evaluation” (see image 6). However, this left students without any instructions as to which book cart or shelf was in what order—they pulled the books, placed them on a book cart, then pulled more books and placed them on a different cart.

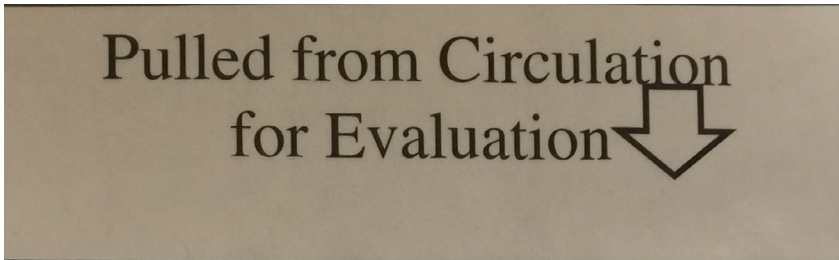


Image 6: First Evaluation sign

Thus, I revised the signs to provide numerical order to the “book madness.” This way, students knew where to place books first, second, third, etc. (see image 7), and it allowed me to evaluate books in the order that they had been pulled from the shelves.

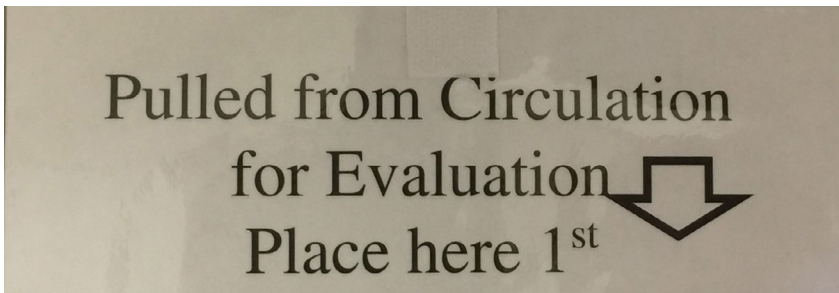


Image 7: Second Evaluation sign

However, a little bit later it became clear that the signs were still not clear enough because students did not always pay close attention to the numbers on the signs—apart from a number and two small letters, they all looked the same. I therefore added some color to the sign, coloring *first* yellow, *second* blue, etc. (see image 8). From then on, the books were usually in order, which allowed me to work more efficiently.

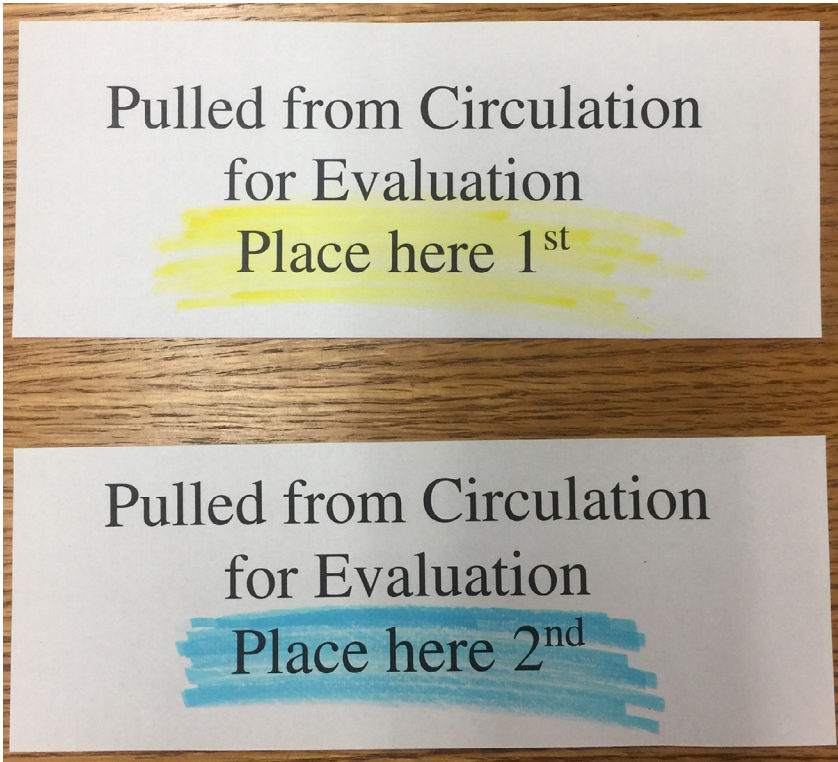


Image 8: Third Evaluation sign

However, my “sign woes” were far from over. Images 9 and 10 show two quite different signs: the only similarities are a few words and two lines of text. Image 9 clearly indicates books that we needed to box for BWB, while image 10 instructs student employees to reshelve those books.

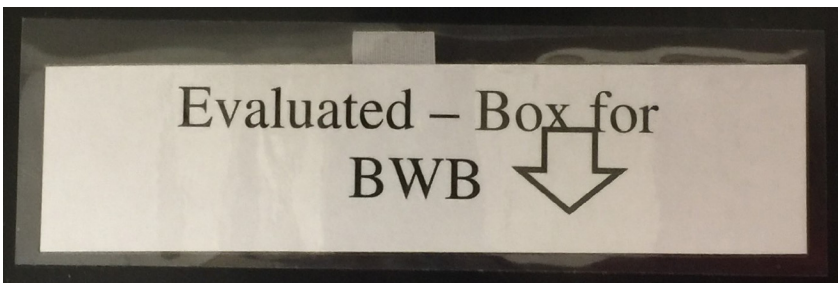


Image 9: Box sign: Original

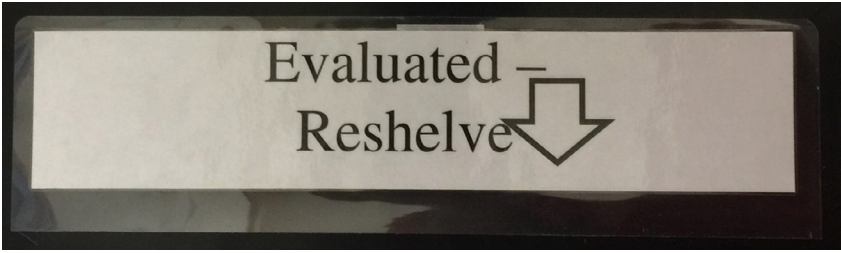


Image 10: Reshelve sign: Original

It turns out that these signs needed color—lots of color, and color that truly communicated the difference. I ended up coloring all “Re-shelve” signs in green and all “Box for BWB” signs red (see image 11) to minimize the possibility of errors.

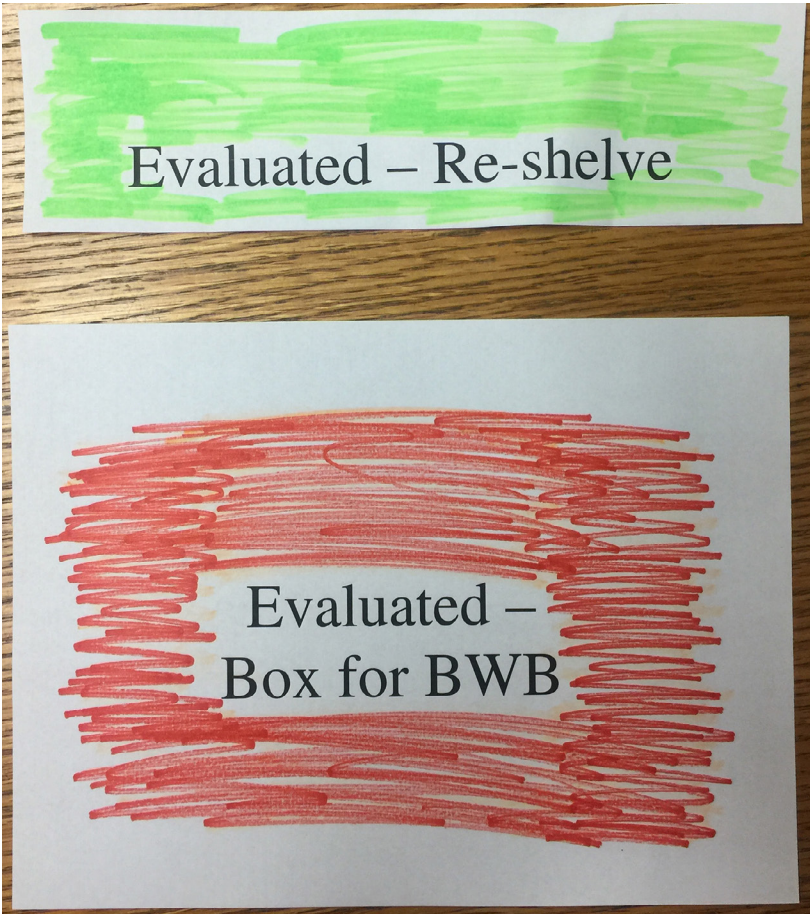


Image 11: Box and Reshelve signs: Revised

Signs need to be clear, and they need to be crystal clear. Whatever we as project managers do, we must make sure that those individuals who work with us receive the clearest instructions possible. If our instructions and signage are not clear, we cannot blame anybody but ourselves if others make mistakes. Make the signs clear, place them where people can clearly see them, and place them in a way that does not foster confusion. Image 12 shows a book cart filled with books and what appears to be crystal clear signs. Well, they are clear if you are standing, and you are looking down onto the book cart. But imagine sitting on a chair: the angle is different, and it is much harder to see those signs. It so happened that one of the best student employees I ever had the pleasure of working with encountered such a cart and boxed all the books for BWB. The lesson is clear (pun intended): avoid confusion to the best of your ability.



Image 12: Box and Reshelve signs (on cart)

Keep Documentation Updated

LESSON: AS THE PROJECT PROGRESSES AND YOU MAKE CHANGES TO THE WORKFLOW, MAKE SURE YOU KEEP ALL INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURE DOCUMENTATION UPDATED.

It is easy to become so involved in a project that you forget to keep documentation current. A minor change here and an added step

there will quickly cause confusion if the documentation is not current. Clear communication should not merely happen once but needs to be regular. Duplicate any changes in verbal instructions in written documentation.

POST-PROJECT LESSONS/FUTURE PLANS

Vendors to Consider

LESSON: ALWAYS INVESTIGATE OPTIONS FOR EVALUATION PROJECTS.

We used Better World Books as a vendor for all titles that we removed from the collection and did not sell in our library book sale. BWB does require libraries to send books regularly to keep their account active, but we were otherwise happy with them.

There are services such as OCLC's Sustainable Collection Services/Greenglass that might be useful for some libraries. I also investigated www.DiscoverBooks.com.

Continuous Evaluation

LESSON: COLLECTION MANAGEMENT INVOLVES CONTINUOUS EVALUATION OF THE COLLECTION.

A library's collection is never "done." Books get published daily, and libraries add new titles that fit their collection management policy on a regular basis. At the same time, titles grow old and out of date, and librarians need to evaluate the collection regularly to remove titles that have served their purpose and at the same time discover weak spots in the collection. I have developed an evaluation schedule that requires me to evaluate certain sections of the Library of Congress Classifications every year, which means that the whole collection is evaluated once every five years.

Evaluate Your Evaluation

LESSON: EVALUATE YOUR EVALUATION JUDGMENT BY TRACKING INTERLIBRARY LOAN AND PURCHASE REQUESTS AGAINST THE TITLES YOU PRUNED.

At the end of an evaluation project, if you have kept good records, you should have a lengthy list of titles you have pruned from the

collection. Over the next one, three, five, or ten years, you can now compare that list to titles that your patrons request for purchase or through interlibrary loan (Ash 1963). How many titles have been requested that you previously pruned? If the number is low, you have evidence that your project was a success.

THE FOOL'S LESSONS

We all make mistakes. However, there are some of us who may stand as a warning beacon for others not to make the same (or similar) mistakes. Consider this final portion of this paper such a beacon.

Be Careful with That “Delete” Button

LESSON: IF THERE IS NO “UNDO,” BE CAREFUL HITTING THAT “DELETE” BUTTON TOO HASTILY.

Throughout the project, I often came across duplicate copies of titles. In many cases, I kept one copy in the collection, but pruned all additional copies. At the beginning of the project, I did not differentiate between all copies vs. some copies of a title. What was the result? No matter if I retained a copy of a title or not, I (initially) deleted all OCLC holdings ... no matter if I had withdrawn all or merely duplicated copies from the ILS. In other words: in the initial stages of the project, I removed OCLC holdings for titles that were still in our collection. Once I discovered that mistake, I created a new space on my desk and ensured that I did not withdraw the OCLC holdings of titles of which we retained a copy.

Save Document Version 1, Save Version 2, Save Version 3, etc.

LESSON: IF YOU MAKE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO A DOCUMENT, SAVE IT FIRST, AND THEN SAVE THE NEW DOCUMENT AS NEW VERSION.

One of the frustrations with spreadsheets is that they do not necessarily understand how to place Library of Congress call numbers in correct order. This causes frustration among those individuals who pull books from the collection and walk back and forth between shelves because BS 4 is listed on the spreadsheet between BS 3900 and BS 4100 (using imaginary call numbers). I attempted to alleviate this problem by removing the periods (“.”) in the call numbers.

This caused more problems than it solved. For example: after the modification, BS 1171.2 appeared as BS 11712 on the spreadsheet, which the student employees now had to decipher: besides BS 1117.2 the call number could potentially also be BS 117.12. To my horror, I had made the change without saving the spreadsheet with a new name, and I had made the change the previous day. This meant that the original list of titles, as imperfect as it was, was now lost. Thus, before you make significant changes, save the file with a new file name, make the changes, and then evaluate if the changes had some unforeseen negative side-effects before proceeding.

Work Hard to Find Ways to Work Smart.

LESSON: LOOK FOR SHORTCUTS YOURSELF, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY: REACH OUT TO COLLEAGUES TO FIND WAYS TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY.

Some may interpret asking for help as a sign of weakness; others may see it as a sign of inexperience. However, librarians are known to cooperate, and I have yet to meet a librarian who is not willing to share tricks of the trade to make another librarian's life easier.

For more than a year, I followed these steps to add a title to a list of items that I would then withdraw (Sierra uses the Create List function):

- I scanned the barcode of the title and waited for about two seconds for Sierra to respond.
- I clicked on “View Item Record” and waited for about two seconds for Sierra to respond.
- I clicked on “Add to List” and waited for about three seconds for Sierra to respond.
- I clicked on “Add Another Item” and waited for about three seconds for Sierra to respond.
- I repeated the process, sometimes 100 times a day!

One day I met with a colleague who had much more experience working with Sierra, and he showed me a Sierra search query (JSON) that would allow me to add as many barcodes as I wanted to a list. From beginning to end, the process took approximately two minutes to complete; compare that to ten seconds of waiting for each title!

If you are a Sierra user and wish to know how you can use the JSON to add barcodes to a Create List, please scan the QR code of Image 13.



Image 13: QR Code: Sierra Create List

The lesson is simple: ask colleagues near and far for help, for shortcuts, for tips and tricks of the trade. There is no need to work harder if there are ways to work smarter.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation and pruning project at Colorado Christian University was a success: in six years, we removed more than 30,000 titles that had seen little to no usage, and their removal did not weaken the collection in a meaningful way. The pruning eased the collection's move into a temporary location. Three years later, an even smaller collection will move back onto the campus, making that move cheaper and less complicated.

Evaluating and pruning a collection may not be popular among librarians and library stakeholders, but it is necessary for providing library patrons with the best resources. One key to a successful project is to conduct it correctly, and I hope that this paper has given you insights into the negative lessons to avoid and the positive ones you can implement.

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Shrinking into our Space

Reducing the Physical and Budgetary Footprint of the Library While Increasing Access

Beth Kumar, Director of Library Services, Graduate Theological Union

ABSTRACT: The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) Library in Berkeley, California, has implemented significant changes to reduce its physical and budgetary footprint while enhancing access to resources. Serving a diverse consortium of theological schools, the library has consolidated its collections, digitized materials, and expanded digital services. By reducing its physical space and increasing reliance on electronic resources and shared print programs, the library has supported the GTU's financial goals and improved service to distant students and faculty. The collaboration with the Internet Archive has been pivotal in preserving rare materials. Despite budget cuts and staff reductions, the library remains a critical resource hub, leveraging technology and partnerships to maintain comprehensive access to theological content and exploring new affiliations to extend its reach.

INTRODUCTION

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) Library is a consortial library located in Berkeley, California, serving the students of the Graduate Theological Union. Formed in 1962, the GTU currently consists of nine separately accredited theological schools from Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist traditions, five academic centers, seven affiliates, and non-degree certificate programs, such as the Interfaith Chaplaincy Program. The degree programs are at the graduate level and include DMin, MDiv, MA, MTS, ecclesiastical degrees, and the PhD program, with the library serving as the connecting hub of all students.

The GTU Library has changed its patron services, physical spaces, and collections as part of the campus five-year plan to close the budget gap and realign services to better serve students and faculty at a distance. Specifically, GTU's idea was to bring employees and

classrooms together by reducing library space by half (a reduction of 15,742 sq ft), which allowed all campus departments to move into the building. This change allowed for the other campus buildings to earn significant rental income.

COLLECTION CHANGES

This plan called for the physical space of the library's collections to be reduced, while significantly expanding online services and collections. The first floor of the building became the sole space for library research collections and patron services, including the staffed service desks and the rare book and archives reading room.

The transition involved:

- 1) Collection consolidation
- 2) Expanded cooperation with other research libraries
- 3) Growth of electronic resources

The initial goals for collection consolidation included:

- Moving all library staff and collections off the second floor
- Reducing the circulating collection footprint by 30% (approximately 7,000-10,000 linear feet)
- Avoiding new off-site storage costs for the long-term
- Providing access to digital and print research content held elsewhere

Librarians investigated and implemented various tactics commonly used by research libraries to address the decrease in the print collections:

Digitization and Controlled Digital Lending

Partnering with Internet Archive, print collections, mostly duplicates, were donated for non-destructive scanning. People can discover the link to the scanned item through the library website and view it on archive.org. As of summer 2024, over 20,000 GTU items have been digitized and are available on archive.org, with scanning ongoing.

Participation in Shared Print Programs:

By participating in the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium (SCELC) shared print program, the library agrees to keep specific book titles for 15 to 25 years. These titles are scarce in California, with some being unique to the United States. Student employees have labeled the spines of these books for visibility and promotion, and the catalog records reflect GTU's long-term commitment to keeping these items on the shelves.

For journal collections, the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) program verifies and consolidates volumes in compact storage systems, providing complete access for partner libraries. GTU participated in a gap-fill program with other WEST libraries to donate volumes to complete runs of titles. Interlibrary Loan (ILL) allows for the access and exchange of materials among partner libraries.

Purchasing eBooks and eJournal bundles

The collection development policy was revised to favor purchase of ebooks over print books. Print books would only be bought if electronic copies were unavailable. Print journals were switched to electronic journal bundles to eliminate print journal subscriptions wherever possible. For example, we subscribed to five print journals with the publisher Equinox. By canceling the print and subscribing to the online-only bundle, we now have access to seventeen journals in religion at a lower price. Similar decisions were made with larger bundles as well, such as a 750-title Project Muse package. In addition to the benefit of all distance students having instant access to these titles, the library saves on the costs of binding, postage, and staff time spent on bindery shipments.

PHYSICAL SHIFTS

The plan involved several overlapping phases, and the presentation consisted of photos of these physical changes in the library building from 2022 to 2024.

1. Donation and removal for digitization.

Items were quickly processed and boxed by a team of six student employees. Rare books were taken off-site temporarily for safekeeping and returned at the end of the project. Microforms, monographs, reference materials, and some periodicals were donated to the Internet Archive for digitization and controlled digital lending. In all, roughly 60,000 of the 700,000+ items were donated in the first round, the majority being duplicate copies. Hundreds of thousands of items remained in four off-site storage locations during this phase, as the primary focus was on the main library building, although one off-site storage location of duplicate circulating material did have collections donated.

2. Large-scale shift and signage.

A professional moving company shifted the 400,000-plus items in the main library circulating collections into the reconfigured first-floor shelves while the library remained open for patrons. New signs helped people locate the reorganized collections and library services. After the books were relocated, the first floor closed for the construction of library staff offices, while the second floor remained open for patrons and staff.

3. Analysis of collections for shared print programs, digitization, and online acquisitions.

GTU Librarians continued to use Greenglass to compare collections against other peer libraries, digital holdings, and commercially available ebook and ejournal collections. They made decisions about where to deselect and relocate print holdings permanently, when to purchase e-resources to replace print, and when to rely on holdings of other libraries. After four months, the first floor reopened in January 2023, and the library staff moved downstairs. Ten thousand rare materials, held off-site temporarily for their protection, returned to the building. The second floor closed for the construction of classrooms and non-library staff offices, followed by the relocation of employees including faculty, which was completed by Fall Semester 2023.

4. Enable online access and adjust collection development policies.

Librarians began to reconnect digitized copies or purchased copies into the catalog as they became available. Shared print and shared digital program agreements were negotiated and begun in discovery, access, and collection management workflows. Librarians and the faculty library committee revised the collection development policy to steer the development of the collections in the future in terms of subjects, formats, numbers of copies, and reliance on library partners. Librarians continued to analyze collections to reduce the physical collection and make space for new books.

BUDGET REDUCTION

As part of the five-year strategic plan, the GTU was required to reduce the annual budget by 20% to create financial equilibrium. However, as the GTU library is a consortial library, the library budget is separated from the general campus budget. The library budget is divided among nine schools offering a variety of accredited graduate-level theology degrees, each paying based on a formula consisting of their programs' rolling four-year average of credits. As such, the GTU's contribution is the highest, and is roughly 25% of the \$2.3 million budget. The eight member schools pay proportionally for equal services.

On the expense side, about half of the budget is spent on staffing and benefits. Another large percentage covers building expenses, maintenance services, IT support, HR, and business office functions. Roughly \$400,000 is spent on library collections and software, and less than \$10,000 remains for library hardware, office supplies, professional development, and events.

The library has been tasked with keeping a flat budget for the past four years, with expected reductions in the future. As electronic resources expenditure increases by 5–10% annually, the staff and collections have felt the impact of reductions. This equilibrium has been accomplished in collections with bundling as described above, cuts in the standing order collections, and journal-title cancellations. These were achieved by working directly with faculty and targeting areas that are no longer part of the curriculum and do not have active faculty doing research. Staffing cuts were more challenging, as the

staff is already smaller than in libraries of similar collection size. The presentation discussed how the regular staff once numbered more than forty; today, there are only ten. Over the last four years, positions have been eliminated, some through vacancies and retirements, but not all. The eliminated positions are Serials Assistant, Conservator, Circulation Assistant, Head of Circulation, Branch Librarian, and Assistant to the Library Director. Of the remaining positions, some have been combined, some have reduced hours, and others have eliminated functions. In addition to the ten regular staff members, there are roughly ten to twelve part-time student employees at any time. Although not on the library's payroll, the evening and weekend security guard position has been eliminated, and the library reduced its hours to daytime, weekdays only.

FUTURE PLANS

Going forward, with a smaller staff, a smaller space, and a reduced budget, we will be in continual evaluation mode to ensure that students and faculty continue to have comprehensive access to theological resources. We have worked to expand offerings through partnerships and purchases and linking and highlighting open-access resources. We have been looking at technology to help us be more efficient and have trusted our long-term student employees with tasks previously managed by regular staff. One benefit of being a graduate-only institution is that student employees often stay for five years or more, and we can train and grow their library skills to manage more complex tasks, such as copy cataloging, serials, signage and map creation, and supervising the branch library.

We do have one large bright spot in expanding our access: our strong relationship with the Internet Archive. In addition to continuing to donate materials to them, we have some collections of interest to researchers that are held in our rare book collection. Previously, someone would need to travel to Berkeley to view these in our library. We experimented with bringing items to Internet Archive's offices, but many items were too fragile for the short car ride to their headquarters. Instead, the Internet Archive has set up a digitization center in the GTU library, which can be used to scan materials we own, such as rare books and unique shared print items. The Internet Archive staff operate the machines, while GTU

librarians identify the priority of materials. The equipment has been set up as of July 2024, and the operators are being trained. The first two collections we want to digitize include an Islamic Manuscript Collection comprising 110 texts from the early sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. These have finding aids, but the full text is not available online. The other collection high on our priority list is 240 separate editions of the Book of Common Prayer. This collection includes editions not adopted by the church and is of great interest to researchers. GTU librarians have been fundraising to support the staffing of the digitization center and are optimistic that the first scans will be available in Fall 2024.

The GTU Library is also investigating expanding the patron base, as our own enrollment shrinks. As some libraries have patron categories for independent researchers to associate or for other seminaries to affiliate with the library, we haven't offered an easy path for access in the past other than a visiting scholar program, which required individuals to be physically present in Berkeley for a time. Unaffiliated scholars have long inquired about using library resources remotely, but we did not offer options for remote associations. We have succeeded with our first out-of-state affiliate, the Wilmette Institute, a Bahá'í institution located near Chicago. GTU librarians load Wilmette patrons into our library system, offer online orientation and instruction sessions, and support students and faculty using chat, Zoom, and phone services. We provide interlibrary loan services and on-demand scanning, as we do for all students at a distance. We believe we could support other small schools in this way. Still, we are investigating the workload on our librarians and finding schools and partners who would mutually benefit from the collections we have.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of the Graduate Theological Library is an example of how strategic changes can enhance access while addressing financial constraints. By reducing its physical footprint and expanding digital services, the library has successfully aligned with the campus's five-year plan to close budget gaps and realign services. The innovative use of digitization and shared print programs has allowed the library to maintain its status as a research hub while

optimizing space and resources. Despite budget cuts and staff reductions, the library has continued to provide comprehensive access to theological resources through partnerships and technology. The goal of ensuring sustained support for the diverse GTU community remains in our minds as we explore the next chapter in our library.

Succession Planning

Preparing for the Transitions in our Professional Life

Susan Ebertz, Emerita Associate Professor and Director for the Library, Wartburg Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: As one thinks about the transitions and career moves in one's professional life, succession planning may be something to consider. Succession planning may also be utilized for short term absences such as vacation or sabbaticals. Whether one leaves all the responsibilities until one returns or cross-trains someone to do the tasks or do some of the tasks while "gone" needs to be contemplated. Feelings of obligation to the organization may determine how much energy is spent in the process. The session will look at identifying and developing skills within the library staff and mentoring the staff not only for the library but for future jobs they may have. Succession planning also involves preparing supervisors and administration in order to help manage the transitions and changes that will inevitably arise when staff leave or have a new position within the organization. The session ended with a time for discussion.

It is important to see my context in order to understand my remarks. I retired last summer after working at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque (Iowa) for 26 years. I was the director of the library and associate professor. I had one paraprofessional for 36 hours per week, and approximately 36 hours per week of student workers. Usually, the paraprofessional lasted for about three years since it was an entry-level position. I had a six-month sabbatical every three-and-a-half years. I would need to find someone to be either a sabbatical replacement or divide up the tasks between the staff person and students. I usually took my sabbatical in the spring because by then the tasks had become routine for the students. The topic for this session came about through my reflections on my career and on the situation when I retired.

Succession planning is leadership development, systematic, and ongoing. One of the classics on succession planning or executive continuity is Walter Mahler and William Wrightnour's *Executive Continuity: How to Build and Retain an Effective Management Team* (Mahler and Wrightnour 1973). It is old but has good material. In addition, a good blog entry on succession planning was published in 2021 in Atlassian's *Work Life* blog. Author Kat Boogaard gives a good summary of succession planning (Boogaard 2021).

For me, succession planning was developing leadership skills with the paraprofessional staff and students, as well as teaching them various library tasks. I used the free version of a project management software for assigning tasks and responsibilities to the paraprofessional and students. They were all considered staff and were assigned responsibilities. We also had an extensive document system with procedures for all the tasks and responsibilities. Helping staff know what their responsibilities are, how to do a good job, and feel successful in performing them are all important for leadership development.

Mentoring the staff is also an important component of leadership development. I was talking with someone recently who mentioned that it is hard to teach someone who doesn't want to be taught. The relationship with the person is important in creating the atmosphere necessary for good learning to take place. It also may be the case that COVID-19 pandemic experiences have taught people to learn by themselves rather than from another person. Helping that person realize through relationship that there are different ways of learning may be effectual in that case. Mentoring provides the relational element.

There are three scenarios involved in mentoring. Though the actual mentoring may be similar, the amount of time invested may vary according to how long the replacement will be.

- The first scenario is when you are leaving and need a replacement. The mentoring would include teaching everything that you do. (You may not want to announce that you are retiring or in the job market! It is possible that once the announcement is made, you will be seen as a lame duck.)
- The second situation in mentoring is when you need

someone to fill in for the short term. This would be the case in which you are taking a long vacation or a sabbatical or other paid time off. You will need to decide what you want to have someone else do. When I took sabbaticals, there were some tasks that I still did. In the case of vacations, I was never away long enough for this to matter: either I did the tasks before I left or after I got back.

- The third scenario is mentoring to help someone grow into a possible future position. There have been student workers who later became librarians because of their job in the library. The skills they learned and the support and encouragement they felt helped them in the discernment process.

Another classic management book is Peter Drucker's *Managing Oneself* (Drucker, 2008). In it he asks several questions that we should ask ourselves to help us understand ourselves. When we understand ourselves and use that to help others understand themselves, we can begin to help in leadership development.

The first question is "What are my strengths?" (Drucker 2017, 4). Drucker believes that we may not always know our own strengths and suggests that feedback analysis may be an important tool in discovering what they are.

His second question is "How do I perform?" (Drucker 2017, 12). He first asks in relation to this whether we are a reader or a listener (Drucker 2017, 14). Readers are those who need time to think about an answer or give a presentation. Listeners can understand a situation and reply to what is needed at the time. In understanding how one performs, Drucker also asks the question "How do I learn?" (Drucker 2017, 17). Some learn through writing. Others learn through talking. If we think we learn through one way but actually learn through another, we may mess up. Also, it is important to know whether one is a loner or works with people (Drucker 2017, 21). (Drucker has several other questions that help a person to figure out how they perform.)

The third question is "What are my values?" (Drucker 2017, 24). This is an important one. If what is important to us is not what is important to the company or institution, we will not succeed. This

does not just include ethics. It includes the way in which things are done as well. Mission and goals may differ between the person and the organization, which may create problems if not recognized.

The fourth question is “Where do I belong?” (Drucker 2017, 33). This question deals with discernment of vocation and the type of organization that is the best fit.

The final question is “What should I contribute?” (Drucker 2017, 35). There are two aspects involved in this question. The first one concerns what we actually contribute to the organization. The next deals with what we want to contribute to the organization. Sometimes these two things match up and we feel content in where we are. However, if our worth is not valued or we do not feel appreciated then there will be dissatisfaction. Drucker then talks about using these questions to understand our relationships. In our mentoring then, we need to understand these so that we can actually help the person develop leadership skills.

Succession planning not only involves leadership development; it is systematic. In my former position, the paraprofessional position was entry-level so I either encouraged them to find better jobs or they left because they found better jobs. I encouraged them to learn new skills and different skills than they came with. I wanted them to learn things that they could then use in their next position. Recently I was talking with the supervisor of someone who had taken a better position elsewhere. The supervisor thanked me for training the person so well. That may not have helped our organization, but it did help the profession. There was a case in which a person who worked in our library later started a library in a small town to which she had moved. The town had no library. With the skills she learned in our library she was able to start a library. She got funding and a space from the town to do so.

Succession planning should be an ongoing activity. If not to develop people for our position, it is helpful to develop people for the library position or adjacent types of vocation. If you are thinking about transitioning to a new job, it is helpful to begin before you even are thinking about it. And perhaps if it is ongoing, no one would know that you are thinking of leaving.

In a Father’s Day sermon given on June 16, 2024, by Michael Ohno at Anaheim Revive Church, Ohno talks about how a father can mentor a son. He mentions there are three important steps in mentoring: “the foundation of relationship is being loved and known;” “the father teaches and models for the son;” and “the father trusts and empowers the son” (Ohno 2024). As I listened to the sermon, I thought about how leadership development through mentoring follows those three steps. The relationship with the person is important and the mentee should understand that the mentor respects and appreciates the mentee. The third step of trusting and empowering is key to the mentoring relationship.

We turn now to the idea of preparing supervisors and administrators. When I was planning on retiring, I wanted to influence what happens in the library after I left. There were some important projects that I wanted to see continued in the library.

In talking about influencing supervisors and administrators, I want to pull together several threads. The first thread comes from a presentation that Chris Rosser and Michael Hanegan did for the Atla Board of Directors to help the board understand AI better. The presentation on Wednesday, Jun 19, 2024, talked about *en no shita no chikara mochi* which translated from Japanese to English means “The strong one under the floor.” Rosser and Hanegan talked about the library as being the strong one holding up the floor of the educational institution. However, those above the floor do not see what is beneath it. The administration and faculty do not see that the library is holding them up. Becoming more visible to the administration and faculty is important. (See also Hanegan and Rosser, 2023.)

Another thread is from an *In Trust* podcast with Amy Kardash and Frank Yamada, “Leadership, Innovation, and What’s Ahead in Theological Education” (Huffman 2024). Frank Yamada used the term *churn* several times to describe the situation in theological education because of the number of schools that have new CEOs or Academic Deans in the last six years. Most have no experience in administration. Some of these have not come out of an academic institution and do not understand the role of the library. They do not see that the library is holding the institution up.

How do we mentor administrators, especially new ones, to understand theological libraries? How do we effect change or achieve

goals? Ultimately, effecting change is the issue behind understanding and navigating institutional politics. As we consider this issue, it is important that we realize that one of our goals is not for our own power; rather it is that we can further the goals of the wider organization. The mission of your library is less important than the mission of your school, and the library's mission should be in support of the seminary's mission. That said, it is important that sometimes change or achieving goals can help the organization (Ebertz 2013).

We will basically look at three perspectives on understanding and navigating institutional politics. There are multiple perspectives to consider in understanding and navigating institutional politics: we have to consider the formal and informal organization of both the library and the broader institution. The library's formal organization may have a head of the library: the library director or dean. The institution has a president or rector at the top of the organizational chart. There is a hierarchy. Everyone knows to whom they report and who reports to them. Someone is the boss. There is structure. The relationships are set. We know where we belong. We know who has the formal power.

The informal organizational chart may look totally different. The Administrative Assistant has lunch every day in the refectory with three people. The four of them share what is going on and have built relationships with each other. The VP of Finance always eats in her office. There is no hierarchy. There is no formal structure. Relationships can change. Someone may feel left out or even powerless in the informal organization. Let's look at some of the dynamics of formal versus informal power.

If you are the director of the library, you have formal power within the library. "Formal power is the power granted by an organization to whomever is in charge or responsible" (Ebertz 2013, 396). There may be specific decisions associated with this power. For example, a library director may have the responsibility to make decisions about purchasing periodicals. However, most library directors would likely agree that they lack formal power within the theological institution. In most seminaries or theological institutions, in fact, the library director has very little formal power at all. So in a sense there is both the inside and the outside of library politics. In one situation you have the formal power; in the other you do not. Similar principles

apply to both situations. The difference is in how you affect that change or achieve goals.

Informal power, on the other hand, is the power granted by others in the organization and is built on the relationship with others within the organization. It can be someone that others trust or respect, or be someone who is very competent. Sometimes a hint of this can be seen when something new is suggested at a meeting. Who do people glance at? In other words: “others see the person as a leader” (Ebertz 2013, 396). Those with informal power can influence certain decisions that are probably not given to them through formal means. The informal organizational chart helps to examine the flow of information and examine the strength of each person’s network relative to the others. For example, a library director may not be able to put a new procedure in place if the influencers in the library are not in agreement with the changes. For example, if you are implementing a new ILS, you will want to get the library staff on board with the change to the new ILS. This is to help those with informal power to get on board.

To effect change and achieve goals the informal power wielders (influencers) need to be brought on board. So, if you are at the top of the formal organization and you want to effect change, you will need to influence the influencers. I was on an ATS accreditation visit once where a student talked about the president as being hierarchical, monarchical, and whimsical. The president forcibly pushed his agenda through and did not have the support of the students, staff, and faculty. The mission of the school was in jeopardy because the one at the top did not understand the importance of the interplay between formal and informal power.

Trust and transparency are important virtues. Influencers will follow formal leadership they can trust. Being transparent means that the influencers do not wonder what the real agenda is. Similarly, team building is important. When those who report to you feel that they are a part of the team, they are more likely to trust you. The influencers know that they are a part of the process and are not powerless.

One thing to note here is something I’ve thought about because of my experience. I notice that some of my relationships are stronger with certain students and not with others. I’ve wondered whether

I am playing favorites. As I shared this with others for advice, I was told that it is human nature that we may trust some more than others. The thing is not to have some feel disenfranchised by that. What this means is that all should feel that they have equal access and are not powerless.

I had a conversation once with a seminary president who was retiring. I was told by a friend that I should look at the president's dissertation. The president had written on Paul's confidence expressions in 2 Corinthians. It seems that Paul "asserts his confidence in the Corinthians" as a way to encourage them to further good works. I asked our president how his dissertation affected his leadership style. He had not thought about it but wondered whether confidence and grounded hope was a way in which he influenced the administration and faculty. Perhaps that is another way in which we can influence the influencers.

If you are looking at the broader institution where you do not have formal power, how do you become an influencer? You will probably laugh at me, but when I was in high school I read Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936). To me some of the things he mentions, if they are done with honesty and transparency, are not all that bad. Trust and transparency are important in gaining influence. We must be who we really are and not try to dupe others. Knowing those in different levels of the formal organization is also important. Those in custodial positions can be just as important as those in managerial positions.

I think sometimes who we are can get in the way of becoming influencers. My Myers-Briggs may say that I am an INTJ. But as I mentioned earlier, I am a functional extrovert. What this means is that I have learned how to be outgoing when needed. I have learned to enter into conversations that my introverted self would resist if I didn't push myself. It's Sheryl Sandberg's "sit at the table" reference in *Lean In* (Sandberg and Scovell 2013, 27). I find it easier to sit on the side than to take a seat at the table where the discussion is happening.

Things do not always work the way we want no matter how hard we try to influence the outcome. They hired an interim after I retired. It was someone I recommended. This was a positive way that I influenced. However, the position description for the new library

director was created after I left. The position was downgraded to a staff position rather than remain a faculty position. Sometimes things go our way and sometimes they don't. Succession planning may be a good way to make sure that our responsibilities are carried on by someone else, but it may not always mean that things will remain the same after we leave.

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Tools and Technology for Teaching the History of the Book at a Theological Library

Brandon Wason, Head of Special Collections, Pitts Theology Library

ABSTRACT: This presentation explores methods for teaching the history of the book within a theological library context. The first part highlights the significance of teaching this subject in theological or religious education settings. The second section delves into letterpress printing, offering various approaches to demonstrate its use from traditional metal type to modern technologies such as 3D printing and CNC machines. The third section focuses on instructional strategies for teaching the history of the book in the library. The final section examines how to effectively showcase aspects of book history through exhibitions. The presentation bridges the traditional world of books with the modern trend of libraries as centers for creative thinking and innovation.

In June 2021, Pitts Theology Library received a donation of an antique iron hand press, which presented us with a choice either to simply display it as a large museum piece or put it to use as a functioning instructional tool. We chose the latter. This presentation covers our experiences using the printing press and other tools for teaching the history of the book, and it further reflects on the way that these tools impact our work as librarians.

THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The invention of the printing press and the introduction of printing to Europe had wide-ranging effects on Western culture by increasing the speed of producing books, lowering costs of bookmaking, and, therefore, making books more accessible. Francis Bacon famously stated that printing, along with gunpowder and the compass, was an invention that “altered the state of the world” (Bacon 1813, 55).

Some modern bibliographers and historians, notably Elizabeth Eisenstein, have referred to the advent of printing as revolutionary (Eisenstein 1979, 3–42). In the fifteenth century, it was thought of as a divine gift. For instance, Giovanni Andrea Bussi called it a “sacred art” which had been “brought down from heaven by the Divine Shepherd” (Needham 1990, 108–109). Johannes Gutenberg himself, in the colophon of the 1460 *Catholicon*, acknowledges the aid of the Omnipotent God who helped bring about the printing of this book “not by means of reed, stylus, or quill, but with the miraculous and harmonious concurrence of punches and types cast in moulds” (Marston 1956, 89). Even in the late nineteenth century, we can find this sentiment depicted in various illustrations of William Blades’s *The Pentateuch of Printing* (Blades 1891, 1, 43, and 83). Issues of divine providence aside, teaching the history of the book within the context of a theological library is beneficial for several reasons: (1) books and many religious traditions are inextricably linked, (2) books provide a window into the world in which they were created, (3) books provide us with insight about the reading practices and interpretations of their readers, and (4) books are deeply connected to our profession as librarians.

First, *books and many religious traditions are inextricably linked*. Thus, understanding the history of the book provides both context and appreciation for these religious traditions. We think of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as religions of the book, but writing in various forms plays an indispensable role in many religious traditions. Religion and the media that record it often have a dynamic inter-relationship. For instance, Christians were early adopters of the nascent codex format and even played a role in its popularity as a medium (Gamble 1995, 49–66). When printing arrived on the scene in Germany, the first major book printed was a Latin Bible, but other smaller writings, mostly religious in nature were printed even earlier by Gutenberg. Martin Luther, making use of the newly-invented printing press, prolifically produced Flugschriften (or “flying texts”), which had a lasting influence on the European landscape of the sixteenth century. These are just a few examples of how the history of the book and religion are intricately connected.

Second, it is beneficial to teach this subject because *books provide a window into the world in which they were created*. Excluding for the moment matters of textual content, books are cultural artifacts

and the products of the resources, technology, and craftsmanship of their time. This is most clearly evident in the way that the medium containing the written word changes depending upon regions and time periods (e.g., think of a Sumerian cuneiform tablet versus an Egyptian papyrus roll versus a medieval parchment codex, etc.). Understanding of the materiality of books, therefore, provides a better understanding of the culture behind the writings we are interested in preserving.

Third, *books shed light on the reading practices and interpretations of their readers*. Here I refer to the ways that the different formats in which books have been produced affect their use. A scroll is read differently than a codex. Additional color or decoration might guide the reader or exist for the reader's enjoyment. Font size and typeface may convey what is most important on a page. The arrangement of the text may dictate what is Scripture versus what is commentary. An encyclopedic work might be better suited for a large folio while a private devotional work might be better suited for a small octavo book. Moving parts might be used to demonstrate astronomical or anatomical principles. How the content is presented affects the way that that content is consumed.

Finally, *books are intricately linked to our profession*. As librarians it is in our best interest to know about our collections and the historical contexts in which our profession developed. Knowing about the books in our collections makes us better stewards of those materials—how to handle them, preserve them, promote their use, and make them accessible to researchers.

LETTERPRESS PRINTING

Back in June of 2021, when we received that donation of an iron hand press, I had very little hands-on experience with letterpress printing. In high school I took graphic arts classes and even printed on an offset printing press, so I was not starting from square one. Nevertheless, operating a hand press was quite a different task. The press we received was a Washington-style printing press dating from the 1880s. Washington presses were popular printing presses in the nineteenth century. In their general form and function, these presses resemble the larger wooden printing presses that people

often think of when they think of a printing press. The distinguishing feature of a Washington press is the use of a toggle mechanism to lower the platen rather than a screw. Our press, produced by the Wesel Manufacturing Company in New York had been purchased by the Western Book Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church, located in Cincinnati, Ohio. The press was likely used as a proof press since it is relatively small for its style. At some point it was moved to the United Methodist Publishing House headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, where it was put on display with other antique printing presses from the organization's history.



Image 1: Washington style printing press

When the press arrived at our library, it was inoperable. It was basically a giant 500-pound paper weight. Being somewhat mechanically minded and knowing my way around a woodshop, I took on the responsibility of bringing the press into working order. The first

thing I replaced were the girts, or leather straps, used to move the carriage in or out. The original girts were dried, cracked and broken. Traditionally girts were made from the back of a horse hide or bull hide (Moxon 1683, 72), but I purchased some vegetable-tanned leather straps which worked well for this purpose. Once the girts were replaced, the carriage moved in and out under the platen. Second, I created a new tympan, which is a wooden and metal frame wrapped with material designed to hold the paper and to soften or equalize the pressure supplied by the platen. I also created a forestay to support the heavy cast-iron carriage when it was in the outer position.

At this point, I had been in contact with the leading expert on iron hand presses, Robert Oldham (Oldham 2006). He was passionate about seeing our antique press being used again and offered to travel to Atlanta to help us get the press up and running. In August of 2021, Oldham shared his wisdom, and the two of us finished setting up the press, which involved creating a new frisket that we welded together at my shop. I mention the help of Oldham since it is often beneficial not only to rely on the expertise of others, but also their connections. Oldham secured for us various tools and equipment necessary for running a letterpress (things such as galleys and furniture, leading and spacing, quoins, a pica pole and a composing stick). He also put us in touch with a local printer who gave us a large chase. The library purchased its own metal type from Skyline Type Foundry in Prescott, Arizona. Oldham also taught me that it is important not to become overly preoccupied with historical accuracy. For instance, we used elastic bands instead of paper in the frisket and rare earth magnets instead of quoins to secure the printing block. Demonstrating the principles of printing is more important than historical accuracy in every detail.

A different possible title for this presentation is, “How learning about letterpress printing has made me a better librarian.” I had tried to learn as much about letterpress printing as I could. This included reading books, browsing websites, and taking classes related to early printing. I printed at a local letterpress shop and purchased a couple of smaller presses for myself. As a student of early printed books, this dive into the world of letterpress printing helped me better understand how printed books were created and I began to look at early printed books with new eyes.

Letterpress printing has the connotation of printing with moveable, metal type, but there are traditional approaches used in letterpress printing that either supplement or replace the use of metal type altogether. These include wood type, printing plates, such as stereotypes or copper plates, and printing blocks or cuts. All of these are materials that people can still acquire today at antique stores, auction sites, or from people in the letterpress trade.

One can easily find used metal type at online auction sites and there are still a couple of foundries in North America making type. The advantage of using metal type is that the chemical composition and general features of type today have not changed much since Gutenberg in the middle of the fifteenth century. For that reason, demonstrating printing using metal type is perhaps the most authentic way to show the invention of printing. Yet this form of printing is extraordinarily time consuming. For unskilled individuals (like myself) it takes hours to compose a single page of dense type. This is a skill that only becomes efficient after doing it for a while. It also requires having a lot of type on hand and a way to store and organize that type when it is not in use. For that reason, I like to keep type around to show what it entails to compose with metal type, but I generally do not print with metal type for classes or other visiting groups. This led me to explore alternative technologies to use with the printing press.

The sibling of metal type is wood type, which was popularized in the nineteenth century. Wood type is typically made from a hardwood such as beech or maple and is useful for printing large letters whereas metal type is suited for smaller letters and finer details. Wood type is often associated with posters and metal type with books. Wood type as artifacts are popular antiques and purchasing a full set of wood type for printing starts out at several hundred dollars. Printing with wood type is a great way to get people into the practice of using moveable type, which has similar organization and storage requirements to metal type.



Image 2: Metal type in a printing forme



Image 3: Wood type being sold at an antique store

One low-hanging fruit is acquiring pre-made printing plates and cuts. Through eBay, we purchased a printing plate for *The Hymn and Tune Book for Use in Old School or Primitive Baptist Churches* (1886). Having this plate is a convenient way to discuss printing because we can put the printed book on display open to the page of the printing plate to show students how the two are related. Photo-etched zinc printing blocks, or “cuts” as they are often called, are also a great option to present a design, illustration, decoration, or advertisement that is ready to be printed. Ebay is chock-full of printing cuts and they are relatively inexpensive. The main drawback with printing cuts is that finding one that is useful for a particular purpose is a challenge because what one can find online is usually a bit random. Still, people find the experience of printing from cuts quite entertaining.



Image 4: Photopolymer plates

Advances in technology allow us to develop new types of raised surfaces that can replicate the process of traditional printing with type and blocks. One of the attractive features of these newer approaches is the ability to begin the design work using image editing tools or 3D modeling software. The idea is that we can create something using modern skillsets which compensate for our lack of traditional

skillsets such as cutting a woodcut. There are three technologies that I will address for helping to demonstrate printing: photopolymer plates, 3D printing, and CNC machining.

Today, many letterpress printers use photopolymer plates for printing, instead of (or to supplement) printing with metal type. These are light-activated resin plates that can be adhered to a thicker base. Companies like Boxcar Press in New York can create these plates from digital files. They also print very well. We had a couple of plates made for us at the library. The first was a reproduction of the first page of Nicolaus Jenson's edition of Eusebius's *De evangelica praeparatione* (On the Preparation of the Gospel). This is not only Jenson's first printed book, but also the first book that employed Jenson's celebrated Roman type. I chose this for the print not only because of Jenson's typography, but because this allowed us to draw attention to an interesting feature of book decoration. Many fifteenth century books have decorated initial letters, which come out of the manuscript tradition. Our copy of *De evangelica praeparatione* was professionally illuminated, but the crafts person responsible for supplying the initial letter used a P instead of an E. This raises questions about the process of illumination—unlike some other early printed books, Jenson did not use guide letters and it is possible that our illuminator was not literate or was absent-minded when they supplied the wrong initial. This unusual mistake provides us with the opportunity not only to highlight the mistake, but to correct it using printing sheets that we printed on our press. By printing the page without the initial letter, students or visitors could add their own decorated initial in their own style. The second photopolymer plate we had made was that of the woodcut title page of the September Testament, the first printing of Martin Luther's German New Testament. At an event commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the September Testament, we set up a proof press so people could create their own printing of this historic title page.

We wanted to implement the use of emerging technologies that were not often associated with letterpress printing and so we first worked with the makerspace on campus to recreate a woodcut from our collection using a 3D printer. This was not our library's first foray into 3D printing. In 2017, we 3D printed a model of an indulgence chest for use in an exhibition, which gave us optimism about this new use of 3D printing. However, the result of our

initial test was less than sophisticated. Our 3D printed woodcut was not perfectly flat and because of the way that the 3D model was designed, many of the finer sections were not properly supported and broke off. Our model could have been constructed differently or scaled larger to bring out better detail and so we plan to revisit this, possibly with a resin printer. Others have used 3D printing in place of wood type and the examples I have seen seem to be very promising (for example: <https://www.printmypart.co.uk/single-post/2017/11/16/3d-printing-letterpress-printing-blocks>)

We have experienced more success with another technology for creating woodcuts: a computer numerical control (CNC) machine. Though there are similarities between the two technologies, 3D printers and CNC machines, there is a fundamental distinction. 3D printers (filament and resin printers) work by building up objects layer by layer. It starts with nothing, and by the end of the print job there is a 3-dimensional object. CNC machines, or more specifically CNC router machines, work by removing material. A CNC machine starts with blank material, usually a piece of wood, a sheet of plywood, or plastic, and carves into that material. Both technologies are computer operated and run on particular types of code.

To make a woodcut, I started with a relatively simple image. Despite using modern technology, I knew I was not going to be able to reproduce the fine detail of an Albrecht Dürer woodcut. The first image I created was a printer's mark for Andreas Torresanus, a fifteenth-century printer from Venice. To produce this woodcut, I scanned the original image from the printed book, cleaned up the image in Adobe Illustrator, and prepared the file in a program called Carveco Maker. In this program one can designate what type of cuts to make, what endmills to use, and how deep those cuts should be. Carveco Maker generates the G-code, which governs the speed and paths of the router along X, Y, and Z axes. The image of the printer's mark was carved on to a piece of cherry wood and when printed with red ink made a fairly accurate representation of the original mark.



Image 5: The process of making and printing a CNC woodcut

The second woodcut I created was from the 1477 German Bible printed by Anton Sorg. The woodcut is a relatively simple depiction of St. Paul sitting with a codex and holding a sword. Given the level of detail that I could easily attain using the CNC machine, I decided to enlarge the original by about 300 percent. The woodcut was carved into MDF (medium density fiberboard), rather than a hardwood, mainly because MDF stays flat, and I had good experiences carving into MDF with minimal tear-out. Though MDF absorbs ink more than hardwoods, it did make for a great printing medium. We have used this same wood block to print a few hundred woodcuts. And while the CNC is a remarkable tool that can (mostly) replicate the traditional woodcut, it does lack a little bit of soul. But it makes up for it with dust and noise.

I continued to play around with the CNC machine and produced other forms of artwork. I first experimented with making wood-type posters, but progressed to images, such as one of Martin Luther or a multi-colored woodblock adaptation of Vincent van Gogh's "Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette." Thus, one can take the medium of printing with CNC woodblocks much further than trying to replicate historical printed images.

Part of the problem using tools like 3D printing, resin printing, or CNC machines, is the learning curve with respect to the specialized software and the idiosyncrasies of the machines themselves. Of course, there are often online communities that are good sources of information and help for these technologies, but, in general, modeling prints and designing CNC woodcuts requires a lot of time. The payoff is the ability to create something that is unique and can have direct relevance to your library's collections. Another consideration is cost, not only for the printers or machines and the consumables, but also potential software subscriptions that may add up.



Image 6: CNC Woodcut posters

I have simply offered a few ideas of how modern technology can help aid in demonstrating the printing process, although there are simple and inexpensive approaches to printing for people who do not want to invest in one of the aforementioned technologies. For instance, a few years back my kids and I used Lego bricks to print Valentine's Day cards. Anything with a raised surface can be used to print, so the hurdles of technology or costs should not be prohibitive.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION AND THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

The various media we have used to demonstrate printing has been incorporated into our library's instruction to classes and visiting groups. Being part of a university, we have both undergraduate and graduate students visit the library, and we work with K-12 students through our Hands on History program. So when we approach the topic of book history, we try to tailor our approach to the audience, but the essence of the content and the materials used are generally unchanged.

While it is important to point out that the advent of printing in Europe is certainly not the beginning point of book history (nor even of printing, which developed earlier in East Asia), this does seem to be a useful starting point since this is the period in Europe's history that underwent the largest changes both in terms of bookmaking

but also culturally with respect to the Renaissance. By focusing on the fifteenth century, one can contrast the two contemporary modes of book production: manuscripts and printed books. It is helpful to ask questions such as: What would be involved in manuscript work versus what was needed to print a book? How long would it take to copy a book, such as the Bible, by hand? How long would it take to print the same book with type? When might one method be more advantageous over the other? Physical objects such as manuscripts, printed books, metal type, and composing sticks help complicate the situation since there is much more work involved in printing than pressing a button.

After talking about printing comes the fun part of using the printing press to pull prints. The process includes loading paper in the tympan, inking the printing forme using a brayer, positioning the bed under the platen, and of course pulling the handle to lower the platen and make the print. We demonstrate how the work is done, but let students do the work themselves. Sometimes inconsistencies in the print, due to inking or uneven pressure, show how the variables affect the outcome. We have printed a few different media on the press, but people seem to enjoy printing the woodcut of St. Paul the most.

This presentation has put a lot of emphasis on printing, but this is, of course, only one aspect of the history of the book. One could trace the history of the book through various types of media, such as cuneiform tablets, papyrus manuscripts, scrolls, codices, palm leaf manuscripts, and woodblock prints. We also address the materials used in traditional Western books, which may include vellum or linen paper, leather, wood, animal-based glue, linen thread, ink, and writing instruments. There is an undergraduate class called “Writing with Animals,” for which we have done presentations showing how deeply instrumental animals were for the production of books. For the class, we discuss vellum as both a writing substrate and cover material, various types of leather bindings, tortoise shell bindings, glue for bookbinding, quills, worm holes, and the various depictions of animals in books and manuscripts.

Another tool we have used on various occasions is a reproduction of Martin Luther’s 1529 German Litany. I selected this short book for its length and format. Since it is only sixteen pages in octavo

format, it was originally printed on a single sheet of paper. Ann McShane, our digital assets librarian, scanned the original work. Then, using Adobe Photoshop, I arranged the pages onto a double-sided sheet which we had printed. Thus, this single sheet of paper shows how an entire pamphlet could be printed with two pulls of the printing press. After the sheet is folded, sewn together, and cut, one is left with a printed book in the style of the sixteenth century. We've combined this octavo with a paste-paper binding workshop offered through our Conservation department, so that one could have a unique, but also historically-fitting, binding for their book.

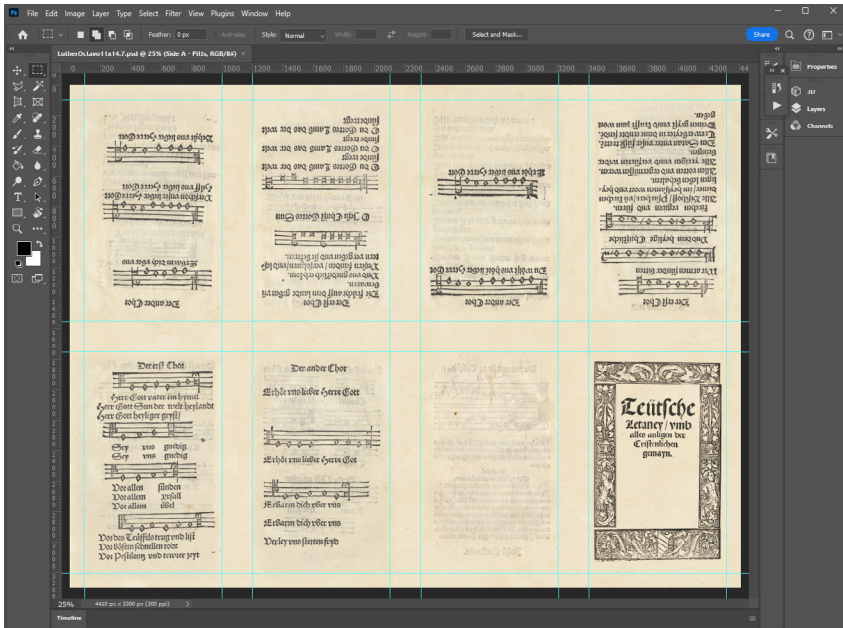


Image 7: Photoshop setup for creating the octavo print of Martin Luther's German Litaney

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions offer another venue for presenting information related to the history of the book, since this allows us to combine text, artwork, books, artifacts, props, multimedia, and activity guides to tell the exhibition's narrative to various age groups. It goes without saying that an exhibition related to book history should include books. Books tell their own histories through their colophons, their accounts of

printing, depictions of printing presses, or images of those involved in the craft of printing. Yet books, through material evidence, also provide details of the people with whom they are associated. Books can provide a lot of points of discussion, including their content and their sources of information, the context in which they were printed, how and when they were decorated or bound, who owned them, and how they were used. Books as physical objects connect the world of today with those people who made them hundreds of years ago. For instance, seeing a simple fingerprint, in the same black ink as the printed text, establishes a connection between us and the Jewish printer Eliezer Toledano of Lisbon (or his assistant), who printed Hebrew texts under the looming threat of persecution and expulsion in the Iberian Peninsula. Handwritten notes correct the printed text of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. Personalized bindings owned by the Earl of Sunderland highlight the craftsmanship of early eighteenth century bookbinders. A bookplate designed by Pablo Picasso for his friend and art dealer's son, Alexandre Paul Rosenberg, illuminates some of the interconnectedness of the twentieth-century art world and book collecting. Knowing the history of a particular book adds an extra element of appreciation, elevating it from a simple witness of its original time period.

Books or other contemporary prints become the source of exhibition artwork and when enlarged present their features in unintended, but sometimes powerful ways. One of the best illustrations of an early print shop is that of Johannes Stradanus called the *Impressio Librorum*, published in the late sixteenth century. The illustration demonstrates various tasks of the print shop, including composition, correcting prints, inking presses, operating the press, and drying and collating printed sheets. Though our library does not own a copy of the Stradanus print, high quality reproductions of it are in the public domain and freely available for use in exhibitions.



Image 8: Reproduction of Stradanus's *Impressio Librorum* displayed above an exhibition case with printing props

Artifacts, props, and reproductions are excellent tools for presenting glimpses into various aspects of book history. The curators of our *Materiality of Devotion* exhibition (2018–2019) included a section on the implements and elements of writing, which included examples of a reed pen, a feather quill, yellow ocher, malachite, lapis lazuli, and oak galls. For last year's *This Sacred Art* exhibition, I included various props from the printing process, including a few lines of type on a composing stick, ink balls, and a prepared printing forme with the text of John 1 in Latin. In another section we included two hand-carved woodcut blocks by the artist Jorge Lar of Denmark, which were used to print his edition of Aesop's Fables. Having these props on display allows visitors to visualize what tools and materials were needed for book production.

Props can often be enhanced by supplying additional context. For this reason, we employed the services of two artists who created short videos demonstrating their respective areas of bookmaking. The two videos were simply looped to show repeatedly in the gallery for people to view at their leisure. The first artist was Jorge Lar of Prelo Press, who provided us the woodcut blocks and his edition of Aesop's *Fables*. Lar participates in various demonstrations at fairs and other events bringing the traditional craft of printing to public audiences. In the video he recorded for us, he presents traditional printing practices: he levels and sets the printing forme, dampens the paper, inks the forme with ink balls, and pulls multiple prints using his replica printing press. While giving tours of the exhibition, people would ask questions about some of the props we had on display, and I was able to point them to the video to show how they were used. The second artist we worked with was Julia Bangert, an illuminator at the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz, Germany. We asked Bangert to create an illuminated E for our Eusebius print and she did amazing work and provided a wonderful video for us. Though Bangert used modern paint brushes, the technique imitated historical decoration found in incunabula. The video she supplied was quite popular as people were drawn to seeing the talented artist at work.



Image 9: Exhibition activity guide showing a student-made bookplate

Lastly, we have used printed brochures, catalogs, and activity guides to convey information from the exhibitions for various audiences. The activity guides, developed under the direction of our Coordinator of Digital Initiatives, Liz Miller, are aimed at K–12 students, rather than college students. These guides relate important information about the exhibits in fun and interesting ways, such as fill-in-the-blank questions, scavenger hunts, crosswords, and drawing

exercised. We had a section on book-ownership in the exhibition and here in the Activity Guide you can see that students were asked to create their own version of a bookplate, an example of which you can see in the image on the right.

I hope this presentation engenders a larger conversation about methods of incorporating the history of the book into library instruction. Though this is what has worked at Pitts Theology Library, it may look very different in other theological libraries. Some libraries have book labs and makerspaces and are well equipped to include hands-on learning as part of their curriculum. Yet the entry point for doing this type of teaching is not formidable. A small hobby letterpress can often be found for a few hundred dollars and, as I mentioned, printing cuts are abundant. Though not every library has a 3D printer or CNC machine (ours certainly does not) it is possible that people in the wider community would be happy to lend their services for educational purposes. Or there is always the Lego brick route. In terms of metal type, I find it useful to keep some around, perhaps in a composing stick or printing forme, for making the connection with Gutenberg and the most common way books were made in the West for the 500 years following the 1450s.

Earlier I mentioned that as librarians we have a special interest—some may say calling—to study the history of the book. I personally have found the subject matter quite rewarding since it addresses topics like human ingenuity, technology, and culture. Interacting with a 500-year-old book gives me a deeper appreciation for the content of that book and how many people were involved in bringing that book into the world. It is a remarkably rewarding experience to be able to share this information with students and others and so I hope that this presentation can help others in religious and theological libraries to think more about their work with teaching the history of the book.

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Weeding Physical Collections for the Library of the Future

David Kiger, PhD, Director of Libraries and Theological Librarian, Milligan University and Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan

ABSTRACT: The turn toward digital resources has come with blessings and challenges. Electronic journals are quickly accessible and have, more or less, diminished the need for print journal collections. Electronic books afford simultaneous usage from an entire class and so can offer an affordable textbook alternative. In addition, the move toward Open Educational Resources is also facilitated by digital resources. Nevertheless, theological libraries (like other humanities disciplines) still see a valid need for physical, printed books and resources. In this session, I discuss my personal weeding story with an emphasis on how it impacted library space; and focus on the way that the physical collection will be used in the future. The weeding of a library is not only a part of routine maintenance, but it also should be responsive to the needs of library patrons and the institutions to which the library belongs.

I work at a small academic library with only five full-time employees. This means that collection maintenance can be quite challenging due to our heavy workloads. Additionally, being an academic library, we face unique challenges, as faculty often feel a strong connection to the texts. When I began my role as a theological librarian, I faced a daunting task. The collection was 52 years old and had never been systematically weeded. To complicate matters, our seminary had just merged with a larger institution, resulting in curricular overlap. In addition, the merger resulted in the loss of circulation data from the Seminary Library collection.

I began contemplating the library of the future. The library of the future is context dependent. Each library is going to be different based upon its own context. For the purposes of my library, I view the future library as a welcoming space facilitated by a librarian, with a curated collection that meets the needs of the patron base.

These needs encompass study space and information resources comprised of print and digital materials that meet the needs of the curriculum and also allow for intellectual exploration.

Our initial collection consisted of over 114,000 volumes, many of which were duplicates, outdated, or damaged. We had books spread across 19 holding locations and over 900 print journal titles. Through our weeding efforts over the past seven years, we've managed to streamline this to 85,000 volumes in just four holding locations, with only about 100 non-archival journal titles.

When the project began, my primary goals were twofold: to make the collection healthier, and to make the space more inviting. Regarding the health of the collection, I hoped that the weeding process would improve accessibility, simplify holding locations, and allow us to remove damaged books. The whole process was designed to open the space of the library and would allow our library to move away from the old model where collections dominated the space and librarians were approached only "as a last resort." Creating study spaces has become crucial in fostering the academic culture of an educational institution. The overarching aim was to evaluate and shape the physical collection to transform our library space, making it adaptable to our institution's evolving needs.

We faced several logistical challenges in this process that ranged from deciding what to do with discarded books to alleviating faculty anxieties about the process. When it came to determining what to do with discards, we explored options like book sales, donations to libraries in developing countries, partnering with Better World Books, and, as a last resort, disposal. While we are certainly empathetic to the goals of recycling, a workflow to do so was beyond our capacity given our current roles. The physical process of moving books was particularly challenging due to limited workspace following our merger. To get books to the disposal spot took a significant amount of effort.

One way we were able to address faculty anxiety was the fact that as Theological Librarian I participate in seminary faculty meetings. This role has traditionally been reinforced because of ATS accreditation. Despite my presence in faculty meetings, the merger of the Seminary and the University had already caused some unease, and faculty often have reservations about new learning modes and digital

resources. I found that sharing data, particularly circulation statistics, helped alleviate some concerns. But keeping clear communication lines was essential. At the beginning of the weeding process, I would allow faculty to examine the carts of withdrawal books. This did make the process slower than I would have liked, but it was worth the time for the benefit of the social capital.

We began with print journals, using digital access as our primary criterion for removal. If we had the series in our digital (Atla) collections, we would remove the print volumes. When we started, we tried to recycle the paper from these bound periodicals. We would cut out the paper, load it in boxes, and take those boxes to a local recycling center. We eventually had to stop this because we overwhelmed local recycling facilities.

After periodicals, we moved to the reference collection, but focused on the areas of the Library of Congress classification system that were not directly related to the seminary's curriculum. Because we lacked circulation data, we used several criteria. Chief among the criteria was relevance to the seminary curriculum. In addition, the age of the work, duplication, physical condition, and whether or not a title was located freely online were all factors in the decision-making process. Once we had completed the reference area, we began looking at the lending collection with the same strategy.

Recently, our school administration approached the library looking for space. Thanks to our weeding efforts, the library was able to be part of the solution. However, this has presented new challenges in terms of our future resilience and space allocation. With the loss of space is the loss or changing of library services, but by cooperating with the administration in the change, the library shows a willingness to work towards the goals of the organization.

This has been a long-term project, and the full impact remains to be seen. We've now instituted consistent weeding as part of our collection development policy. Throughout the process it has become apparent that there is no perfect system for weeding. Mistakes will be made, but thankfully most mistakes can be remedied through interlibrary loan or new purchases. Another observation is that faculty support is crucial for smooth operations and increased library usage. Lastly, the process of discarding books often involves

helping people through anxiety about change and fear of missing important resources.

In conclusion, the library of the future, in our view, is a welcoming space with a curated collection that meets the needs of its patron base. It provides space for study, resources for research, opportunities for connection, and integration with modern technologies. As we move forward, we will continue to adapt our space and collection to meet the evolving needs of our institution and its patrons.

After this presentation, there was a strong discussion about strategies for weeding and how those strategies help to posture the library within a university. Space is at a premium in many seminar-ies and colleges, and the library often represents unused space. The weeding process, like any change, brings with it both positive and negative aspects. The challenges related to weeding physical collections highlighted the need for theological librarians to be engaged in the school's curriculum so as to offer the most strategic forms of deaccession possible. Having a vision for the library's space and purpose when it is not occupied by physical books is also helpful.

What If There Are No “Good” Sources of Information?

Considering a Paradigm Shift in Information Literacy Instruction

Kate Wimer, Research & Instruction Librarian, George Fox University

ABSTRACT: The last decade has seen major shifts in culture, the information landscape, and library instruction. For most of that time, librarians have focused on helping students question information sources as a reaction to the rise in misinformation and disinformation and in response to specific requests from those who look to the library as a source of “good” information. Yet, students are still not critical enough of information that aligns with previous beliefs or hypercritical enough of information that does not, reinforcing polarized thinking. There has been a paradigm shift in the information environment and among our students: specifically, that our students’ struggle with evaluating authority may stem from over-critical approaches to research and increasing lack of trust in expertise. If this is true, continuing to teach heavily deconstructive approaches is not only unhelpful, but it may also contribute to the issue. This session ended with some thoughts on ways librarians might engage kindness, curiosity, and generosity to adapt our instruction to this new paradigm.

There is a lot of conversation around the speed of change in the modern era. Whether or not you are considering the exponential growth of the internet or the likely number of jobs a student will work that have yet to be invented, we are all aware that life now is different from what it was last year, last decade, or last century. Librarians in particular are aware of this rate of change (and the things that remain the same), and for the most part have worked to stay current or even anticipate it. However, I believe that one aspect of our work no longer reflects the environment in which we operate: information literacy instruction, especially the evaluation of information and authority.

Let's begin by considering a traditional undergraduate student as a freshman in 2022. Many of us understand intellectually that they are digital natives and that they grew up in a world different from ours, but I suspect that we don't always fully contextualize those realities. For example, if our student was 18 years old in the fall of 2022, then they were likely born in 2003 or 2004. They would have been three years old when the iPhone was introduced in 2007.

Let's fast-forward to their first school "research project", say around second grade. Perhaps they had to make a poster on the water cycle, the Olympian gods, or brachiosaurus. This would place their first instruction about research methods and tools around 2011, the year that Wikipedia celebrated its tenth anniversary. *Encyclopedia Britannica* published its last print edition the year prior in 2010 (Bosman 2012)—they have been online since 1994. Kindle Direct Publishing had been launched four years prior in 2007.

I encourage you to really think about this environment for a moment. Wikipedia is well-established (as is the refrain to stay away from it for "serious" research). Ebooks are here, and the market for self-published works is beginning to thrive. Print reference is on the way out. Our student was still likely taken to a library and shown books, but especially when you add the ubiquity of Google and the smartphone (which dates to the time of their likely earliest memories), their cultural context for research is very different.

Let's keep moving. Our hypothetical student continues to seventh grade—the year 2016, when misinformation, disinformation, and fake news hit the cultural discourse. Librarians and teachers all begin to offer lessons on fact checking and critical analysis. Our student might get their first smartphone around this time—around 80% of their age group will have a smartphone when they start high school (Sandler 2021). They will be sophomores when the COVID-19 pandemic fully lands in the U.S., with its implications for learning, communication, and trust in experts. They have spent the second half of their traditional K-12 years in an information environment that may feel like it offers more questions than answers, surrounded by warnings against false information and worries about untrustworthy sources.

As we consider this student and their context, I'd like to raise a series of observations from my reading and experiences of the past

few years that lead me to believe we're operating in a new paradigm. I don't believe I have the whole picture at this time, but I see a broad picture taking shape. I also don't have a fully developed response to the shift, but I do have some questions, reflective challenges, and small changes that I believe could help librarians, especially librarians in faith-based institutions, better respond to this shift.

OBSERVATION 1: A NEW INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT NEEDS NEW RULES

In their excellent book *Verified*, Mike Caulfield and Sam Wineburg share a compelling argument for changing the way we teach information and media literacy, specifically pointing out that many of our current methods and preferences speak to an information environment that predates the internet. They point to the information environment of their childhoods, when there were more bottlenecks in information sharing, most with a standard mechanism for discerning authority. As they write, "The problem is that we left the three-channel-TV world years ago, but the skills many people learn today remain stuck there.... You may have been born in 2003, but you've likely been taught a media literacy approach from 1978" (Caulfield and Wineberg 2015, 3).

Don't get me wrong, I believe in teaching many of those 1978 skills to our students. Especially in areas like theology, they are still prevalent, and where they aren't obvious, they often underpin the structures of our newer systems. The problem is neglecting to contextualize those older methods and to add to them newer ways of navigating information as it is available now. Not only is it a disservice to our students, but it also raises questions about our own authority.

OBSERVATION #2: WINNING THE BATTLE, LOSING THE WAR

One of my favorite novels is *Ender's Game*, by Orson Scott Card. In it, Ender is sent to Battle School in space where he and his classmates are pitted against each other in zero-gravity war games. One of the many takeaways from the novel is that it is easy to over-complicate

and over-gamify an objective. For those of us who are in regular contact with student researchers, I'd like raise the following questions:

- What is the objective of education?
 - According to us (educators, librarians, higher education professionals)?
 - According to our culture (our media portrayals, broader cultural discourse, and conversations with our communities)?
 - According to our students themselves?

I'm a bit of an idealist. As a librarian, I'd say that the objective of education is to create lifelong learners who are equipped to meet the challenges of our future and to use their gifts in support of their communities. In contrast, I'd suggest that our culture largely tells our students that the objective of education is to get a good job, to be better workers, etc. Many of our students seem to have a sense that the objective of education is to succeed. For many, that looks like a job, but there's this almost nebulous sense of a college diploma being little more than one of the final stepping stones to adulthood and the American dream. This flattening and commodification of education can lead to gaming the system. In many ways, it's exactly what we've trained our students to do in order to meet us in the hallowed halls of higher education. Consider once more the hypothetical freshman of 2022. As they prepared their college applications, they were told to be careful of their GPA, to build a portfolio of extracurriculars and interests that would get them into college. Students who are worried about making less than an A aren't predisposed to ask risky questions or to engage in learning practices that might lead to failure. If everything is done in service of reaching the next goal, there's not a lot of room for personal development and squishy questions. This is how we end up with students who ask things like "Can't you just tell me what you want me to think?" in their general education classes.

In this context, let's also consider another set of questions:

- What happens if students fail to meet the objectives of education?
 - According to us?
 - According to our culture?
 - According to our students?

Again, in my idealistic space, I'd say that failure is a learning opportunity, and usually not that big of a deal. However, a student who fails a class or who fails to complete college is not seen favorably by our culture. Take a minute to think about the ways such failures are usually portrayed in television, books, or film—most of the characterizations are not nice. What about our students, who view the objective of education as getting to that successful life? Given the stakes they are holding for their education, failure in college suddenly feels much more fraught.

Additionally, it may be worth connecting this idea to that shifting information paradigm we already identified, specifically online communities and identities. A third related question arises: What do our students think happens when they are wrong (and what does “wrong” even mean)? In an information-rich online society, our ideas become part of our identity in a new way. In the absence of geographical boundaries, we form communities around ideas: they identify the edges of our groups and those who are other. If I profess the wrong idea in my online community, my connection to it is potentially weakened. I'm now not a perfect fit for my current community—I might even be part of some other group entirely. For our students, who spent so much time during the COVID-19 blip with little other than an online community, this potential loss is felt very deeply, and I believe it contributes even further to a desire to find “right” answers that will help them safely navigate to that end-goal of diploma and success (whatever that might mean). Without intervention, I think we have trained our students to “win” assignments and even classes, but possibly to “lose” on the overall objectives of a college education.

OBSERVATION #3: INFORMATION RICH AND ATTENTION POOR

There is plenty of literature out there on the importance of wonder, curiosity, boredom, and uncertainty (some examples include Fister 2022; Zomorodi 2017; and Turkle 2017), and as any modern American likely knows, these are states of being that are easy to avoid when we have the internet in our back pockets. Rather than speculate or problem-solve our way to answer trivia questions, we ask Siri. If we start to feel bored or lonely, it's easy to pull out social media and start scrolling. If we're uncertain, a few quick flicks can find

someone who is willing to confidently assert an answer. More than providing an easy way to avoid unpleasant affects, however, I believe that having quick answers in our pockets leads to two expectations of information that may also contribute to student behaviors in the classroom and library.

The first relates to the refrain to “research for yourself”. On the one hand, I can get behind this phrase—it’s encouraging students to research! On the other, there’s this pernicious assumption that arises around it that suggests that any lay person can not only locate and access answers to any given question, but can understand and contextualize them across any possible subject. An example of this playing out is the freshman student with no medical training who wants to read literature on a medical diagnosis or condition, but rejects authoritative popular resources (e.g., the Mayo Clinic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, etc.) as potentially biased or not primary enough in favor of medical literature in a database like PubMed.

The other expectation that arises is much less obvious, but I can see its effect across my consultations with students. If fake information exists—that is, information that is full of bias and unverifiable—then there is some sense that its opposite must also exist: information that is completely free of bias and fully verifiable. I don’t think that anyone would actually claim this exists if questioned, but the suggestion of it can be seen in my consultations when students reject pertinent resources for a lack of this hypothetical perfection. I can remember one case of a student needing definitions of major tropes in anime series for a (relatively short) informative speech. The website TVtropes.com was rejected as a “bad source” because it was a ‘dot-com’ website. In several of my one-shots, I ask students to evaluate a variety of unconventional sources related to Bigfoot in the Pacific Northwest (Wimer, 2023). No matter how I preface the assignment to tell them that they can use every source provided for something, I always end up with a string of criticisms and rejections, sometimes of sources that are actually extremely valuable for the prompt.

Finally, it may be worth considering cognitive load in the context of these expectations and the picture we’re building of the modern student experience. Essentially, we have a resource allocation problem. Herbert Simon wrote in 1971 that attention is a limited and

precious resource, and it is consumed by information. He went on to state, “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it” (Simon 1971, 40–41). Without any training in how to allocate our attention, we’re more likely to default to systems that ease cognitive load. Consider the researcher who encounters new information. One way to check its veracity is to compare it to existing knowledge or experiences. If attention is a precious resource, information that seemingly aligns with our existing beliefs may not seem to merit close examination. By contrast, information that feels less plausible (either because it is contrary to existing belief or because of its association with an “other”) may merit extreme prejudice. Both responses allow quick processing of new information without too much attention needed. Without reflection and intention, our autopilots may reinforce our existing biases.

I believe that information literacy is a balance between critical and credible thinking (*credible* here meaning “believing”). An information-literate individual should ask critical questions of new information, but at some point, there must be some credibility placed in authority, especially in areas where the researcher lacks knowledge. For years (at least since our hypothetical student was in seventh grade), librarians and teachers and even the cultural discourse has been encouraging our students to think more critically, to distrust what they find on the internet, and to be careful of the dangers of misinformation. This makes a lot of sense, given the rise in polarization and misinformation that we’ve seen, but we’re still seeing the same “non-critical” behaviors even as our students clearly understand how to critically take apart a given source. Add in the current trend of declining trust in authority, and a new possibility rises. I believe that our students aren’t struggling with evaluating sources because they aren’t critical enough; I believe that they are struggling because they don’t know how to give appropriate trust and credibility to authority. If this is the case, continuing to push the critical approach (as is the trend in many information literacy curricula) may make the problem worse.

OBSERVATION #4: UNHELPFUL LIBRARY MYTHS

Finally, I think there are some myths (used here as “central tenets and ideals of a given group”) around libraries and information that also must be considered in relation to the issues we’re seeing. Some positive examples:

- “Library people are helpers.”
- “Libraries are about connections.”
- “Information creation is a process and scholarship is a conversation.”

Some less helpful examples:

- “Library materials are always credible/authoritative.”
- “‘Experts’ are infallible (or think that they are).”
- “Information at the library is always better than information from the open web.”
- “The internet killed the library.”

Many of these examples relate back to Observation #1: that we’re still operating (especially according to cultural perception) under an old information paradigm. There was a time when the books at the library represented one of the highest forms of authority easily available to the general public. Publication in a book that had been collected by a library suggested that information had passed several thresholds for fact-checking. Besides that, where else were you going to find a full list of the noble gasses or the official rules of Major League Baseball? However, our current paradigm is such that it’s not only faster to find the state law on turning left when the light is red in Oregon.gov, it’s likely to be more authoritative than anything in a booklet at the library, thanks to the ease of publishing updates online. This is a fairly logical process, and yet, I know I’m not alone in working with assignments for undergraduates that encourage them to pick topics like “White Hat Hacking” or “Weird Ways that Gerbils Die,” but still require that they use peer-reviewed literature or books from academic collections and avoid citing websites.

CURIOUS GENEROSITY FOR OUR STUDENTS

So what do we do with each of these observations? What changes might help us adapt to the new paradigms and prepare students to engage with information as it exists now and in the future? I think the heart of the approach for me is one of curious generosity. I've become convinced that I need to check my defaults against each student who is actually in front of me and consider some of the following questions:

- Where are they really on information literacy?
- What has their education taught them to expect? To think is achievable?
- What pressures and emotions do they feel?
- What do they actually want to accomplish, and can we meet them in new ways to achieve those things?
- Where can we hold space and grace for them?

If we don't stop to take stock of where our students are, or if we don't offer them generosity and respect for their contexts, I believe our current approach will not achieve our actual objectives. I also think that there are some shifts we can make in our practice that might help us first to see the answers to these questions, and then to respond better.

"CRITICAL IGNORING" AS A SKILL

This is an idea proposed by a group of researchers that includes the previously mentioned Sam Wineberg, and they've published widely on it (Hertwig et al. 2023; Kozyreva et al. 2023). Essentially addressing the issue of information overload and the scarcity of attention, *critical ignoring* acknowledges that there is more information to receive than I have the capacity to process and encourages a researcher (or just a consumer of media) to be intentional about what they give their attention to. Many librarians are already talking openly about the demands for our attention, but I wonder if we could find ways to work this concept into more of our practices. One big part of this that we may be well-positioned to do is helping students acknowledge, understand, and honor the limits of their understanding and access to information. We already do some of this when we talk to students about scoping their topics. For example, if a paper on the

history of librarianship in the U.S. is only supposed to be ten pages long, one may want to focus on a particular era or region of the U.S. and ignore information (however excellent or interesting) that doesn't connect to that facet of the topic. Can we help translate this skill into the broader disposition of critical ignoring and foster more conversation (and hopefully awareness) on the issue?

KINDNESS TOWARD STUDENTS AND TOOLS

I believe that our students are operating in a learning environment that feels very high stakes and even occasionally hostile. No good learning happens when the student feels threatened, and I believe our best learning happens when we engage our communities in kindness. In fact, some research is beginning to suggest that engaging kindness boosts innovation (Borton and Fratantoni 2024). There are two places where I think library instruction can direct kindness: first to our students, and then to the information we encounter together.

One of the kindest things we can offer our students is to acknowledge them as people with existing knowledge, skills, and history. They do not come to us uneducated (even if their current understanding is not the one we wish they had). When met with utter dismissal of what I would assess as quality sources, my instinct is to double down and tell students that they are being overly critical, but when I manage to pause and acknowledge that they've done a good job spotting potential issues in the suggested resources, the conversation that follows can be one of continued learning rather than failure and frustration. They've done good work in finding the flaws; can they go a step further (welcome to collegiate-level research) and find the strengths?

We can also keep in mind that we are not the only voices they hear speaking about issues of information literacy. They are hearing comments, narratives, and sometimes even instruction about authority in research that we don't always have the power to alter. If I believe the best approach to authority is a balance between credible and critical, how can I be responsive to the strength and tenor of the approach they are hearing elsewhere?

Finally, we can model kindness toward our sources. One small shift I find useful in teaching evaluation of sources is to encourage

students to avoid asking whether it is a “good” source, and to focus instead on what they can learn from the source. Mark Lenker suggests asking students to consider how a source might enhance their understanding of a topic (Lenker 2023, 559). Both are ways of removing some of the stakes from the equation and offering kindness toward new information.

Another slightly larger shift to consider is to demonstrate uncertainty in research practice. There are times when having clean and practiced searches in our demonstrations is necessary, but if students never see the librarian encounter an error code or get unexpected results for a search string, how will they know what to do when they inevitably encounter these themselves? How will they feel about the resource or their own skills when this happens? Even when I do encounter these things, I don’t always remember to explain what I’m seeing and how it’s affecting my choices to my students. I’m very guilty of simply declaring a search string “bad,” and trying a new set of keywords without sharing how even those “bad” results helped me to refine my strategy or suggested that I might need to try a new approach. I’m currently working to make these processes (and my feelings about them) more transparent, and hopefully normalized.

RESEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING

We’ve established that education may have become over-gamified as the pressures of making the grade and being seen as “right” and the emphasis on “verifying” information to a degree that may not be possible leads students to want clean answers for research projects. I believe that pursuing research for understanding is one of the most powerful approaches we can take in this environment (Full credit for this line of thinking should be given to Mark Lenker, whose recent paper in *Communications in Information Literacy* expresses this approach and the need for it: Lenker 2023, 554–572). Helping students to seek understanding of complex topics (rather than researching to find a “right answer”) can better position all of us to do research as a form of exploration. If students are seeking understanding, it may feel safer to engage with unfamiliar information and even potentially incorrect information as part of the process rather than a threat to correct knowledge. Research for understanding can also help frame conversations around sources that are too advanced for

the student; if they aren't able to understand the source itself, how can it increase their understanding? Is there a different source that might help them better understand this one?

Not all of us have the ability to affect the assignments students bring to the library, but where we can, I think we should also advocate for research as exploration as an outcome in assignments. There is certainly a place for research papers and presentations with complete theses and persuasive rhetoric, but there is also plenty of benefit in assignments like annotated bibliographies, executive summaries of literature, and literature reviews to encourage students to seek understanding of complex topics and specific arguments rather than a particular correct answer, especially early in their academic careers or at the beginning of a new program of study.

I think we also need to talk more about the affective parts of research. It's uncomfortable to ask uncertain questions, especially if the asking-and-answering is being graded or otherwise judged. Mulaski and Bruce wrote a piece for *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* that makes a compelling case for "embracing academic discomfort" (Maluski and Bruce 2022). When "research" has previously been connected to the quick answer from a pocket Google, we may need to gently explain and continually remind our students that some of the best academic questions are going to result in uncertainty, frustration, uncomfortable questions, and even confusion. Advanced researchers don't stop feeling these; they simply understand them in context. This space of discomfort and uncertainty is also a place where librarians in faith-based contexts have additional tools. Whether by our own experiences and faith expressions or tools offered by campus religious leaders, our faiths can give us frameworks to navigate spaces of uncertainty and growth, and we should consider leaning on them as we work with our students.

CARE FOR OUR NARRATIVES

Finally, I want to offer some words of caution about the myths that we perpetuate in our outreach and instruction narratives. For every unhelpful myth we carry thanks to modern media (see also stern shushing), there are many that I think we may accidentally perpetuate or even create ourselves. For example, many of us are familiar

with discussions around information creation as a process. How often do we celebrate this process compared to the amount that we point out its flaws? I absolutely believe we need to encourage conversations about the limitations of our information thanks to our processes; but are there ways that we can encourage trust in good process even as we warn about the implications of those limitations? As part of this, I believe that librarians must continue to advocate for transparency and openness in scholarship and speak honestly with students about where we are in this process.

Frankly, I believe that in a bid to demonstrate our usefulness and relevance we sometimes oversell academic research. It's important to advocate for our work and our tools to our campuses, and this sometimes means de-emphasizing their limitations in our outreach, but if a student only ever hears us speak about how excellent library databases and academic literature is, what are they to think when they encounter poor usability, limited access, or even errors or limitations in the literature? If everyone on campus touts academic literature as the best (or even the only acceptable option), what are students supposed to do when the best information really isn't covered by our efforts, but should be supported by information from popular, trade sources, or non-traditional (such as primary or open source options) resources? Are there small tweaks we can make to our database pitches that contextualize their usefulness while acknowledging that they aren't necessarily helpful for all things? I believe that in engaging these questions, we can model a scholarly humility that might help foster trust and dialog with our students.

CONCLUSION

We are living at a time when information literacy feels like more than just the foundation for excellent academic or personal research. As librarians, we have an opportunity not only to teach our students how to do excellent academic research, but also to prepare them to take on the questions, uncertainty, joys, and responsibilities of navigating information in an evolving environment. I think it's time for our profession to carefully reflect on the context in which we're teaching and consider whether we're acknowledging existing strengths and meeting actual needs. I don't have a complete answer for how we will best move forward into the future of information

literacy, but I think our next steps will need to engage kindness, wonder, patience, empathy, and generosity. For those of us who are privileged to engage with these virtues in our faith or in our support of religious contexts, perhaps there is space for us to lead the way in developing the path forward.

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IN-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Practical Uses of Generative AI for the Classroom and the Library

Steve Jung, MSLS, MDiv, Associate Director of Library Services, Hope International University

ABSTRACT: This paper expands upon an in-person session that discussed the practical uses of generative AI by students, professionals, and librarians, and includes more material than could be discussed during the session. The paper discusses the nature of generative AI and prompt engineering, as well as various uses of AI. Each use includes a brief description and then either a comment about its use or an example of an appropriate prompt. The paper ends with a list of resources for understanding generative AI and links to the technologies mentioned within.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence is a broad container of many different technologies. This paper is about one form of AI, *generative AI*: an AI that generates ideas in response to human prompting. For this presentation we are looking only at text generation. (The prompt engineering ideas transfer to other aspects of generative AI, but they are not the focal point of this paper.) For the most part, the paper discusses LLMs (Large Language Models) like ChatGPT/GPT 3.5 or 4o, Gemini, Claude 3/3.5, LLaMa 3, etc.

There is a lot that goes into training an AI that are beyond this discussion, but there are things that we should all know. When an AI is trained, a big part of what it is doing is making connections between an idea or theme and what are the absolute most common things said in relationship to that idea. My terrible example is to think about those word clouds from the early 2000s. The main, or most important, term is largest in the image. The other words in the cloud are of varying size, but the larger the font, the more frequently it is used. In relation to AI training, the response to any prompt is going to be the absolute most common ideas and phrases, the biggest font stuff. This is why many things written by AI seem like plagiarism; it seems like you've read this before. You haven't read that exact text, but you have probably read all the same ideas repeatedly. The output by the AI is the most common ideas in the most common expression of those ideas. Generative AI is not truly creative: It is programmed to deliver the most common expression of the most common topics.

What does this mean for prompts and output? It means that these bots are great at brainstorming, they have a readymade list of the top results at a moment's notice. I will cover that in more detail in the practical section. This also means that AI output can sound lifeless and boring. The good news is that the AIs are getting better at writing with style. It also means that a good thing to do is to put the AI's response back in the AI and ask it to improve the writing. It can do that. Also, people are creative, and they have created entire AIs for the purpose of improving writing and making it sound more "human."

There are many generative AI models out there. Each of them was trained on different material. True, there are commonalities. Most were trained on large collections of public domain books, a lot of open access journal articles, government reports, some social media and web content, and a growing amount of computer code. And because they were all trained on different things and the companies have different goals for their AI, all of them have different strengths and weaknesses. With that in mind, I recommend that when you work, try using several AIs at the same time. I typically work with three models opened in different tabs at the same time. I just copy and paste my prompts into each model.

PROMPT ENGINEERING (FOR NOW)

Direct prompts are the short queries that we put together when we just want an answer. When we ask the AI for “what are the top ten activities to do on the Fourth of July”, we are creating a simple direct prompt. Students often try, “write an essay on....” These types of prompts work, but they may not be getting the most out of the AI. These AIs were trained on a lot of narrative material (books, novels, short stories, social media posts, etc.) so in some ways, the AI “thinks” or “processes” in narrative. Responses might be better if we try to take advantage of the AI’s “natural” work as an author, editor, or wordsmith.

One way to take advantage of its “natural” work is to try to get the AI to work in a narrative form. We can do this by giving the AI a context, creating characters, working with dialogue, and flattering the character that the AI is supposed to be. Think of this like role playing and the AI is supposed to be the “hero” or the one with all the answers. Creating a context helps keep the story focused on the important things. Characters should be chosen appropriate to the topic. I often have librarians or faculty roles in the “stories” I create. But—and this relates to flattery—give the AI the role of the hero, or the one with more experience or intelligence, etc. Dialogue allows your character to ask the AI for an answer. The answer will often come out as a monologue, but it may have bullet points or other odd formatting for a speech. No, this isn’t like asking for an essay, but this is one way to get the parts of an essay. Flattery isn’t about fawning over the AI but is more about establishing a context for the role the AI is to play. You want the AI’s character to be able to answer the prompt and you want it to be honest. In fact, if the flattery is overboard, you can get the AI to start to give erroneous answers; the AI may believe that you, the narrator, were lying and therefore, lying is acceptable.

One very important thing to remember is that this should be a conversation with the AI. Don’t just try to get the entire answer with one prompt. The AI will give a better response the more you work with it. Each prompt furthers the conversation (your interactions become part of its training for that one conversation). Think about it like using filters on a database. Your initial prompt and response set a direction for the conversation and then each additional input/

prompt furthers the answer or narrows the direction. The two of you are collaborating on a story.

And lastly, a reminder. I give credit to Steve Hargadon from Library 2.0 for the following thought: generative AI was created to write fluently, not factually. That should be mentioned to every student we see. Trained AIs do not think. Trained AIs do not have logic or ethics. They were trained not knowing the difference between fact or fiction. They cannot distinguish between information, disinformation, misinformation, myth, or conspiracy theory. They were trained to write fluently and nothing else.

PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL USES

1. Occasional Repetitive Professional Writing

Description: Clergy need to write annual reports, letters to the congregation, and reports to the board. These are all formulaic (and typically repetitive). AI can be used to create templates and then used to fill in the reports.

Prompting Example: Susan, the solo pastor of her church, needs to write an annual report for the board of elders. It needs to cover the financial situation, programming, and relative spiritual health of the congregation. She needed a template and was searching on the internet when she found...

2. Improve a Curriculum Vitae/Résumé and Cover Letter

Description: Use the AI to process job descriptions and then tailor a CV/résumé to highlight the matches. Then use the AI to tailor a cover letter to match the needs of the job.

Comment: For a college student looking for a job this is just finding a template (and there are thousands on the internet). For a student that is graduating and seeking a first career position then, this is great. Find several openings and then copy/paste the descriptions into the AI. Paste the student's CV and ask the AI to reword or highlight relevant items in the CV. This can be done with a job description and creating a cover letter as well. *A note from personal experience and a word of caution:* Just don't leave your CV on your

desk for several weeks while checking out AI capabilities, as your boss may get curious and worry that you are looking for a new job when you are not.

3. *Improve Applications to Grants or Scholarships*

Description: Use the AI to find templates and wordings for grant applications and scholarship applications. Use them as templates. Do not copy and paste the response. It would be academic—and possibly professional—suicide to just paste an AI response into an application.

Prompting Example: Here are the instructions for a grant: [paste grant instructions]. Here is my grant proposal: [paste grant proposal]. Add criticisms and comments to my proposal so that the proposal is more closely aligned with the grant instructions.

4. *Brainstorm Ideas or Topics*

Description: Use the AI to come up with ten or twenty ideas on a subject. Need ideas for a vacation? Need ideas for Christmas presents for your co-workers? Need marketing ideas for the coming year? Ask the AI.

Prompting Example: My wife and I are going to Kauai for a week. What are some adventurous things to do while on the island? Suggestions for places to eat?

USES IN THE CLASSROOM

5. *Generate Research Questions*

Description: Trying to figure out what you don't know? Don't know how to approach a subject? Ask the AIs for ways to approach a topic.

Prompting Example: Liz was assigned a topic in her Church History class that she was not familiar with. Liz asked her professor, “Doctor Thompson, I am not familiar with my assigned topic: iconoclasm. Can you tell me some of the questions I should be asking and thinking about while I start my research?” Doctor Thompson replied...

6. *Generate List of Keywords or Terms for Study*

Description: Ask the AI for a list of the common vocabulary and definitions. This is useful if someone is new to a field and doesn't know the vocabulary.

Prompting Example: Steve, a theological librarian, was going to try and help a kinesiology student, but Steve doesn't understand a lot of the vocabulary. Steve needs help to understand the student's needs. He knows the student is working on athletic movements and knee injuries. Steve asked the professor, "To help this student I need to know the most important terms related to athletic movements and knee injuries. Can you tell me what those terms are?" The professor answered...

7. *Generate a List of Pros and Cons for a Topic*

Description: Allow an AI to create a list of pros and cons about a topic. The AI was trained on parts of the internet, so there are opinions on just about everything. Results will vary on the logic of all the pros and cons, but most AIs should produce a reasonable list of topics, even if it doesn't get all the facts right.

Comment: Pros and cons are going to come across as facts. This is where things get interesting with AIs. They weren't programmed with logic; they cannot determine fact from fiction or misinformation from conspiracy theory. In my opinion, this will only get better if the AIs are trained with weighted inputs. Trusted sources were weighted higher than social media posts in the training phase. Everything an AI puts out as fact should be researched.

The last four items are all variations of the same thing. The AI was trained on a lot of prose writing. The training and the algorithms used basically look for the most common words or phrases to follow a prompt, what most likely should come next. That continues until all the common terms are used. In similar fashion, the AI responds by presenting the most common phrases and words in relationship to the prompt. The AI basically composes from most common to least common; it brainstorms by its nature. The other three ideas, list of keywords, research questions, and list of pros and cons, are all forms of brainstorming, just brainstorming with a twist.

8. *Present a Point of View on a Topic, “how might... understand....”*

Description: It might be beneficial to ask an AI for a point of view. Some young college students need to learn to think beyond themselves. In some cases, we can find books or articles written from certain perspectives (gender, culture, theological point of view, etc.), but not all of that is available. An AI might be able to draw on its training to come up with another perspective.

Comment: Use care doing this. This is not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. Everyone complains about the bias of the AIs. It's true that the AIs were very biased in the beginning, but they are getting better. Part of the issue was the training material. A whole lot of what the AIs were trained on were public domain books, old and presenting outdated expressions of age, gender, sexuality, and race. Add to that the training from current social media and you have AIs that are quite capable of being the most horrible thing ever and proof of total depravity (ageist, racist, sexist, etc.). But with added materials, much from other languages and cultures, those issues are becoming less common. Yes, the programmers can tweak the alignment and make an AI draw things like black Nazis (yes, Google, I'm talking about you), but those are/should be less common.

9. *Summarize an Academic Article*

Description: One strength of generative AIs is their ability to absorb information and summarize. Nuance may not be perfect, but the gist should be provided. Any of the models should be able to handle a simple, “summarize this” prompt. Even Adobe Reader now has an AI built-in for the sole purpose of summarizing articles.

Comment: There are “research” AIs (Perplexity, Consensus, Scite, Semantic Scholar, and others) whose purpose is to search for your topic and then summarize the literature—basically a literature review done for you. These can be good starting points for research if you are working in STEM fields. They were mostly trained on Open Access material (PubMed, Arxiv, and government research). There aren't any (at the time of writing) that are great for the Humanities or Social Sciences.

10. Identify Themes or Patterns

Description: Identify themes or patterns in an article, a chapter from an ebook, or an essay. Enter all the relevant texts and ask the AI to identify themes or patterns.

Comment: The longer the text (or texts) the better the response will be. There are limits to each AI; some will accept longer prompts than others; some AIs will even attempt to cite the various ideas. You can ask for citations, just don't expect them to be perfect.

Those last two items can be handled well if you are interested in training your own bot, or using one that allows training. Google created NotebookLM to be a trainable generative AI. Built upon Gemini, it allows you to add "sources" and ask the AI questions in the prompts about the sources. Students can input their research and course notes to generate reviews, study guides, sample quizzes, etc. This can be used by faculty in their writing process as well. Post notes and research and look for themes, connections, or things that might have been overlooked. OpenAI's GPT family of AIs can be used to create unique AIs for any user that takes the time to do some programming. These trainable bots can be useful in a variety of settings.

11. Edit or "Improve" Writing

Description: AIs are editors/authors/wordsmiths by programming. Paste your text in an AI and ask it for suggestions on ways to improve your writing. Ask it for suggestions on transitions, thesis, argumentation, etc. Some AIs, e.g. QuillBot, are just a cut-and-paste operation.

Comment: Our students are now getting in trouble for this. We ask for few to no mistakes because they should know how to write better by now. But the issue is that all their writing tools are now loaded with AI built-in; they cannot escape AI. Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and all versions of Grammarly have an AI offering suggestions. When the student accepts the suggestions, the AI is now part of their writing. Just fixing spelling or grammar should not be scoring as AI, but accepting entire rewritten sentences should.

Uses nine through eleven are all areas in which students are currently getting into trouble. Overuse of AI in these areas can lead to

students losing critical thinking skills and close reading skills. The other issue is that use of these AI practices is not bad, in and of itself, but in some cases, those ideas are the actual point of an assignment. In that case, this use of an AI becomes a *misuse*. All instructions need to be specific about what is considered a proper use of an AI versus a misuse that will result in academic problems.

I would rather that we all adopt the terminology of *use* and *misuse*, rather than calling it all cheating. What is a misuse in one class may be entirely acceptable in another, thus *use* and *misuse*.

12. Conversation Partner

12A. LANGUAGE LEARNING HELP

Description: Use the AI as a partner in a “conversation” in a foreign language. This could be used for either translation, learning grammar, or to help with pronunciation.

Prompting Example: I am learning basic Spanish. My chapter was on playing soccer. Could you produce a short narrative on soccer in Spanish. I would like to translate it into English. Then please critique my translation.

12B. PRACTICE THERAPY SESSIONS

Description: The AI can be prompted to roleplay as a patient, so that the conversation will be between the AI patient and you as the physician/therapist. The AI has been trained on enough data that it can mimic a patient with depression or with a torn meniscus or any number of other ailments. Several AIs are trained with the OA material from PubMed; therefore, they should have a good grasp of symptoms to a great deal of physical or psychological issues.

Prompting Example: Pretend you are a client coming to a psychologist seeking help with depression. Start by describing your feelings.

12C. HELP FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY (INNER SPEECH PARTNER)

Description: AI is very good at narrative and dialogue. In this instance, we are asking the AI to take the place of a particular person for a conversation. We all go over potential conversations and think about how a conversation might go, inner speech or inner dialogue.

Those with social anxiety often struggle with having those actual conversations. This might help them “practice” how it might go with talking to a faculty member about a grade, an assignment, or asking for more time on an assignment.

Prompting Example: I would like to practice a conversation with you. Pretend you are an English professor and I need to ask you for an extension on an assignment.

13. VIRTUAL PEER REVIEW

Description: Train the AI by pasting in the paper instructions. Then paste the paper and ask the AI for comments and criticisms on how to improve the paper or what are the deficiencies of the paper.

Comment: For a faculty member, this could be a way to save some time on writing comments. One reminder, generative AIs don’t do math. You cannot ask the generative AI to score your paper because they cannot add points.

14. Help with Sermon Preparation

Description: Students or practicing clergy can ask for help with sermon preparation. Paste the exegetical work that was written and then ask for sermon illustration ideas. Ask the AI for improvements of transitions, or other improvements to the grammar and flow of the sermon.

Comment: This is a variation of 11 (Edit or “Improve” Writing).

15. Analyze a Sermon

Description: Paste a completed sermon into the AI and ask it to analyze for content, style, and effectiveness. Ask the AI for constructive feedback. The difference between this and the previous use is that this one focuses on structure and content, unlike the previous one that focused on grammar or illustrations.

Comment: Notice that a few of these AI uses are very similar. By separating them, I am trying to point out nuanced uses.

16. Virtual Biblical Language Lab

Description: Use the AI to help learn an ancient language. Trained on public domain material and in modern languages, most AIs are pretty good with language. Use the pronunciation tools to help learn Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, or whatever. Create vocabulary cards for a specific passage. Get help with learning paradigms.

Prompting Example: Create a vocabulary list with English definitions of the forty most used Hebrew words in the Book of Haggai.

For the next two, it is possible to use a regular AI (Claude, Gemini, ChatGPT, etc.), but using a trainable AI will improve your results. I mentioned Google's NotebookLM earlier (prompts 11 and 12), and recommend you give it a try.

17. Automated Content Creation

Description: Paste course lectures, course notes, reading assignments from ebooks, and other course material into the AI. Have the AI create personalized learning material: summaries of readings and lectures, summaries of major theologians and their ideas, etc.

Comment: Sometimes we have a hard time grasping a few important ideas when they are scattered over such a large quantity of information; AI is good at finding some of those themes. In this case, we are using the AI's training to gather and present ideas that we might miss.

18. Personal Tutor

Description: Paste course lectures, course notes, reading assignments from ebooks, and other course material into the AI. Have the AI behave like a personal tutor. Ask the AI for study guides on the topic. Ask the AI to make flash cards for ideas or vocabulary. Ask the AI to make a practice quiz (with answers). Ask the AI for a timeline of events (again I question most AI's understanding of numbers). Ask it for definitions and explanations.

Comment: Khan Academy and Socratic are great for K-12 education, but our students are past that and are probably not working on the quadratic equation. For these courses, an AI may be an appropriate

assistant to help with learning, especially if your institution does not have tutors for some courses.

USES IN THE LIBRARY

19. Event Planning

Description: Need help planning events for the library? AI can easily brainstorm ideas for events. Need to market those events? Need help figuring out how and who to market to? Let the AI help with that. In addition to brainstorming and figuring out the marketing plan, the AI can also create the wording for the email blast or for promotional works.

Prompting Example: Jennifer is an experienced librarian, but she is having trouble planning events for the coming year. She asked her supervisor, “Karen, what are some of the best events our library could host?” And Karen replied... [*Hint:* try this a second time but make Jennifer an academic librarian. Try it a third time and call Jennifer a theological librarian.]

20. Translation services for the library

Description: Paste the PDF of an article, chapter from an ebook, or lecture notes into the AI and allow it to translate the text into another language. This is great for ESL students because in addition to the translation, you can request a summary of the text or ask for a simplified translation. This is also good for English-speaking students that find a good article in another language and want to access it. [I am thrilled that I don’t have to recommend the language filter to my students now. Most recent articles, downloaded as PDF, are now “readable” due to OCR.]

Prompting Example: Translate the following article into simplified English and include a summary at the end: [paste article here]

21. Create Metadata and Abstracts

Description: Feed the AI some of the digital objects (text or image) from the library and ask it to come up with an abstract and the metadata for the object. This can then be used to simplify the cataloging process.

Comment: This is not without controversy. Allowing the AI to do the work means that a librarian has not actually evaluated the object. This information

should be preserved in the record somewhere. New to me is the term *paradata*. I understand it to be the data about the metadata and that this is where information about the metadata creation should be kept. Thank God for catalogers.

22. Use an AI as an Administrative/Personal Assistant

Description: Use an AI to schedule appointments, send reminders, write emails, create “to do” lists, and a workflow for the day. Siri, Alexa, and the like already do this.

Comment: I’m too old school to even try to learn this, but I’ve read about other people doing it. It doesn’t have to be a voice activated feature like Siri, but it could be.

23. Create a Chatbot for the Library

Description: Create a Chatbot to answer questions when there are no librarians on duty (answering phones and listening for chat). Chatbots can be free, though with limited use, or with a monthly subscription depending on how much use they get—easy to create and inexpensive for a basic bot.

Comment: These Chatbots are trainable, so they are presenting a prompt, but asking for training materials. Typically, they will ask for the URL of the website. They will then train on that website. Most will also follow any hyperlinks from the website and train on those pages as well, e.g. trains on the library website and then trains on some of the LibGuides that were directly linked on the website. After they are trained on the website, they will often allow documents for training. I would recommend the library’s policy manual and the history of the institution. That way the AI can answer those important questions like fines and history of the library.

24. Help with Grant Writing (Templates and Wordings)

Description: Mentioned earlier, but librarians may use an AI to help with writing the narrative or other parts of a grant proposal. Ask the AI for templates and wordings for types of grants. Obviously, the librarian should have done their research about the grantor and previous winners, but this allows for more help with wording.

Prompting Example: Dr. Johnson is the Library Director at a university. She needs to write a small grant proposal asking less than \$1,000 for a 3D printer and its accessories. The 3D printer is intended for Kinesiology and Mechanical Engineering students. She wrote...

25. Help with Coding

Description: As librarians we are often tied to technology, even those of us that are not involved with systems or tech services. Coding can be difficult; one missed semicolon and the whole thing can go to pieces. Or, if you're a Springshare user you may need to try and overpower their CSS in some LibGuide. Even if you aren't a web programmer you can ask for help with coding.

Comment: As the various AIs are upgraded, they are getting trained on more and more coding. Why? Because those programmers that are training the AIs are the same ones that are on Discord every day searching for a snippet of code to make their subroutine work. So, just ask the AI for what you want and what language you want it in. If necessary, copy/paste the code from your LibGuide and ask the AI what part needs to be changed. Very helpful.

This presentation, along with the author's other presentations on AI, are available at <https://sites.google.com/view/practical-information-literacy/ai-in-the-academy>

WEB RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING GENERATIVE AIs

- *LessWrong* (blog site for logic, mathematics, computers, and AI): <https://www.lesswrong.com/>
- *Import AI* (newsletter by Jack Clark on cutting edge generative AIs, training AIs, and ethics in AI): <https://importai.substack.com/>
- *Nicole Hennig* (Librarian for U of Arizona, formerly from MIT; a newsletter with some commentary): <https://substack.com/@nicolehennig>
- *Library 2.0* (Steve Hargadon's webinars, conferences, and "podcast" on AI): <https://futureofai.org/this-week-in-AI>
- *TechCrunch* (news site for technology; a lot about

the money in AI investments and about what is coming out in the days and weeks ahead): <https://techcrunch.com/category/artificial-intelligence/>

- [ECampusNews.com](https://www.ecampusnews.com) (newsletter intended for K-12 teachers, but there are occasional AI items worth the quick read): <https://www.ecampusnews.com/>
- *Hope International's Faculty LibGuide* (a few pages about AI, but a couple of important pages on the conversations to have with students accused of using AI): <https://libguides.hiu.edu/faculty-library-guide/AI>

SOME COMMON GENERATIVE AIS

Large Language Models (LLM)

- Gemini by Google: <https://gemini.google.com/app>
- Claude 3 by Anthropic: <https://claude.ai/chats>
- ChatGPT/GPT 4 by Open AI: <https://chatgpt.com/>
- Copilot by Microsoft (a version of GPT 4): <https://copilot.microsoft.com/>
- LLaMa 3 by Meta: <https://www.meta.ai/>

Academic Research Models

- Perplexity: <https://www.perplexity.ai/>
- Consensus (mostly based on Semantic Scholar): <https://consensus.app/>
- Scite: <https://scite.ai/>
- Semantic Scholar: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>

Chatbots to Program (Free and Subscription)

- ChatSimple - <https://www.chatsimple.ai/>
- RoboResponse: <https://www.roboresponse.ai/>
- CronbotAI: <https://www.cronbot.ai/>
- Chaindesk: <https://www.chaindesk.ai/>
- NotebookLM (not customer-facing, and you need a Google account): <https://notebooklm.google.com/>

POST-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Research and Learning in Theological Education

Michael Hanegan, Founder, Intersections

ABSTRACT: The emergence of generative artificial intelligence presents an unprecedented disruption and opportunity for higher education, and particularly for theological education. The future of learning and work will be shaped and reshaped by this technology and its implementation in our institutions. This workshop is designed to provide some foundational frameworks, concepts, and information and make the case that theological librarians and libraries must assert themselves at the center of these conversations within their institutions. Implications for theological libraries and librarians and theological education more broadly are explored.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence and its impact on the present and future of theological education (and theological libraries and librarians in particular) is both complex and wide-ranging. This workshop seeks to offer some framework, guidance, example policy, and imagination for navigating this uncharted frontier.¹

FRAMEWORKS AND GRAMMAR

It is important to recognize that the conversation about AI and the future of theological education are part of a much larger conversation about the future of education, the future of work, and the future of learning and human formation. This has three immediate applications:

- 1) Navigating the challenges and opportunities that emerge around AI and theological education, theological librarians will be better informed if they are informed by these larger conversations.
- 2) Theological education has profound contributions to make to those larger conversations, particularly as we advance around these questions in our field.
- 3) Understanding the emerging trends and trajectories of the future of work can unlock new possibilities for theological education and higher education more broadly.

Tool vs. Technology. When we think about artificial intelligence, we must make a distinction between a *technology* and a *tool*. A tool is a specific product/app/website/platform that is powered by generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) or integrates into its existing services (e.g., Grammarly). The technology (in this case, generative AI) is what powers that ever-expanding suite of tools and integrations. This distinction is essential as we begin to think about literacy and proficiency. If we work to provide only basic literacy and proficiency in tools, not in the underlying technology, then our capabilities are very vulnerable to the consequences of tools as they change, evolve, and disappear. Doing our best to incorporate a level of literacy and proficiency in the technology more broadly enables us to have both a more durable and agile set of skills as we navigate a world in which the tools evolve and change both arbitrarily and rapidly.

Arrival Technology. Most technological advances require adoption to be integrated in a meaningful way in our lives. This has been true for nearly every technological advancement that we have experienced in our lifetimes because most of the arrival technologies in our world came (at least in some form) before we were born.

As an example, the iPhone was an advancement in technology (albeit a substantive one), but we all had a choice whether to adopt it when it first came out. Electricity and electrification on the other

hand should be understood as an arrival technology. Even if you were not interested in incorporating this technology into your life specifically, it impacted your experience of the world in ways you could neither ignore nor avoid. Generative AI is an arrival technology.

Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). For all our lives the work of human-computer interaction has been the conforming of human behavior to the functionality and design of the machine. If we want to use a computer we must use a keyboard, entering words one letter at a time. If we wish to drive a car, we are forced to use the pedals and steering wheel in combination to safely commute to our destination. The primary way in which most people engage with generative AI (at least in non-technical settings) is through *natural language*. This means that the way in which we interact with generative AI requires a different, arguably more human, set of skills to both leverage and benefit from this technology and the tools that use it.

The Changing Nature of Progress and Advancement. We are historically used to advances in technology that are iterative, incremental, and inconsistent in their overall results. Not all subsequent versions of technology, software, or hardware seem better. This is not the case with generative artificial intelligence. The current level of the technology and the tools that deploy it are so basic that they will continually be going forward. Not only will these tools perpetually improve (with no current plateau in sight), but they advance more than incrementally.

What this means as we work with generative AI tools is that we should bear a couple of things in mind:

- If we find that the current capabilities or results of a tool either disappoint or frustrate what we are trying to accomplish, we must recognize that these are temporary limitations. As these tools get increasingly more capable, we should revisit work that we have been unsuccessful with in the past. This is what some researchers refer to as “the jagged frontier.”
- If you aren’t sure whether a tool can do something, try it. Some of the most interesting and meaningful use cases for generative AI are discovered not designed.

- Don't get too committed to individual tools for the long term. This is true for three reasons: (1) The tools themselves will change over time; (2) There are other tools that will come along that are perhaps more aligned to your work; and (3) We simply don't really know what is coming next. Stay open-minded, be willing to learn, and build the skills necessary to pivot when it's the right move.

POLICY AND VALUES

There are several important and urgent questions that are raised about how we think about policy and practice at the institutional, instructional, and individual levels.

Expectations Should Relate to Current Practice. As it relates to our concerns, critiques, and critical engagement with generative AI, it is important that as we raise questions, issues, and challenges, we are conscious of those same things in our current practice. This does not serve to discount what we might raise, but it can provide a constructive reframing of the actual concern at hand. This is also important because oftentimes, particularly as it relates to a technology that is this new, this disruptive, and improving this fast, we resort to objections that give us the feeling of certainty and predictability. This is an instance of a particular kind of cognitive bias known as the illusion of explanatory depth.

Rules and Restrictions are Ineffective and Counterproductive. Traditional approaches of creating policy filled with specific prohibitions and instructions are both ineffective and counterproductive as it relates to generative artificial intelligence for three reasons:

- 1) Any kind of policy about AI use that includes specific use case instructions or prohibitions, or endorsement of specific tools are vulnerable to rapid (if not immediate) obsolescence.
- 2) AI detection tools have been shown to be inaccurate, to be discriminatory, and to be the object of lawsuits against institutions who use them to prove academic misconduct.
- 3) This approach exacerbates inequity, diminishes transparency on behalf of the institution or faculty member, and does not serve students.

It is for these reasons that some institutions are explicitly enacting policies that prohibit the use of AI Detection Tools (and plagiarism detection tools more broadly).

Recommendations for an Academic Misconduct Policy. As detection tools lose legitimacy and effectiveness, increase inequitable and punitive measures for many of our most vulnerable learners, and do not contribute to the constructive work of students, we are faced with one other issue: the nature of writing and exams are being forced to evolve because of generative AI. Having served on academic misconduct committees as a graduate student, university administrator, and teacher, my explicit academic misconduct policy is as follows:

If it is determined that the student has committed a form of academic misconduct in their work (without utilizing AI and plagiarism detection tools), the formal institutional response should involve three steps: (1) Inquire in a human-centered way about the extenuating circumstances around the student's decision to cheat, (2) inform the student that such conduct is unacceptable and harms not only the integrity of their work but also the quality of their learning, and (3) require the student to complete the assignment again in a timeline that considers any extenuating circumstances disclosed in the first step.

As these generative artificial intelligence tools continue to evolve and improve, the very nature of our learning and work—especially the work of writing—will dramatically change. At this early stage of this disruption, it is difficult to ascertain what that might begin to look like. This is all the more reason that we should not then continue to engage in using time, energy, and money in the traditional processes and proceedings of academic misconduct policy, committees, and processes.

Constructive Policy Values. When we move beyond the traditional approach of prohibition and punitive results, we are left with the need for an alternative framework for how we guide access, adoption, and use of this technology and its tools in academic work. I propose five values as the formative posture by which we evaluate both our practice (institutional, instructional, and individual) and our assessment of tools that will be adopted, allowed, or enabled by the institution.

- *Transparency.* We openly and honestly represent the

power and importance of our tools, workflows, and learning for all.

- *Rigor.* We engage with these technologies to enhance the quality, complexity, and impact of our work for us and for the world.
- *Curiosity.* We expand the realm and potential of our inquiry in ways that make room for ongoing learning and growth.
- *Inclusion.* We recognize that access alone is not equitable and actively work toward literacy and proficiency for all.
- *Play.* We cultivate both joy and excitement in learning as a driver of exploration, increased engagement, and learning.

These five policy values are more extensively explored in our whitepaper, “Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Theological Education” (Hanegan and Rosser 2023).

What we must ask whenever we consider specific actions, prohibitions, or practices is the extent to which those choices serve to maintain or enhance these five values. If we discover that any of these policy values are diminished, we should understand this as an indication that this decision will fail to be both human-centered and effective.

Human-Centered; Pedagogy, Design, and Formation; and AI. I contend that the progression of these three elements is essential to all the work that we do going forward at the intersections of artificial intelligence, theological education, and theological libraries. They must always be considered in this order; moreover, each subsequent element should be shaped by what precedes it.

- *Human-Centered.* What kind of human beings do we wish to be? To what ends do we pursue our work, and how do these things lead not only to the flourishing of the individual, but contribute to the larger human family?
- *Pedagogy, Design, and Formation.* Informed by our understanding of and commitment to our human-centered work, how does our pedagogy, design, and formational work sustain or enhance the goals of

our work? How does it address our concerns not only for the work of our students, but their formation beyond their learning?

- *Artificial Intelligence.* How does the application and leveraging of artificial intelligence serve our human-centered pedagogy, design, and formation (if at all)?

TRENDS AND TRAJECTORIES

Multi-Modal to Omni-Modal. These tools currently accept and generate a wide variety of modalities. While each tool currently has limitations of both the modalities that it receives and generates, there will be a time in the future (with some speculating that we might be there before the end of 2024), when any modality can be leveraged for input and requested for output. When this happens, the speed, complexity, and creativity of what we can do with these tools will increase by an order of magnitude.

Differentiated to Integrated. Thus far, when we have wanted to meaningfully engage generative AI tools, we have had to go outside much of the software and infrastructure that already exists towards specific tools. We might open a new window and use ChatGPT or engage with a plug-in like Grammarly. What is coming very soon and very broadly is the kind of seamless integration that will not only accelerate the adoption of this technology and these tools but will dramatically affect the way we do our work with those tools.

Iterative to Exponential. Traditionally we are used to tools and technology that get better incrementally. Our experience with generative artificial intelligence will not follow this trajectory. The CTO of OpenAI (makers of ChatGPT) recently said that the levels of capability between GPT-3, GPT-4, and GPT-5 would be the difference between a kindergartener, a smart high schooler, and a person with a PhD. We do not have personal experience of that scale of learning and capacity-building in such a short period of time.

THE NEXT SERIES OF ADVANCEMENTS IN GENERATIVE AI

New Flagship Models. The introduction of the newest state-of-the-art (SOTA) model, Claude 3.5 – Sonnet, occurred recently. In the coming months (though the timeline is not public), we expect new flagship models from Google (Gemini), OpenAI (ChatGPT), Meta (Llama), Anthropic (Claude), and several other open-source models. This does not even include the models which are being built in stealth and can be released at any time.

New Integrations. Between now and the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, we will see some significant integrations into major platforms and tools used in research and learning. This includes Google, Microsoft, and Apple. With a dramatic increase in ease of access and use that will inevitably increase the speed of adoption, any kind of policy that treats generative AI as an external tool will be rendered obsolete.

Major Enhancements. As these tools continue to advance in size and capabilities, we should expect an increase not only in the quality of their current capabilities, but in the number of their capabilities and applications as well. In other words, current use is not an indication of how these tools will be used in the very near future. This is also an invitation to begin thinking about how these rapidly advancing capabilities can unlock both new projects and learning.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education is uniquely suited to meet this current moment for a few reasons:

Unapologetically Interdisciplinary. Theological education, more so than many other disciplines, holds within its very design and nature a cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary posture. Students regularly take coursework in languages, philosophy, ethics, history, literature, and other areas within this interdisciplinary work. The focus of theological education on service to the world and the academy inescapably involves a wide range of content, design, and practice.

The utility and application of formal theological training to meaningful and impactful work in other fields and disciplines is

well-documented. The breadth of inquiry that constitutes theological education lends itself to the kinds of shifts that are coming to higher education and human learning more broadly with the advent and acceleration of the technologies and tools that leverage artificial intelligence.

Grounded in the Deep Traditions of Learning and Formation. Theological education draws not only from its deep roots in learning and higher education as one of the most interdisciplinary and high-utility fields in the world, but it also moves among the collective history, wisdom, and practice of the world's spiritual and religious traditions. This rich foundation positions us with not only the experience but the resources necessary to constructively shape and enhance the future of learning and human formation, both in higher education and more broadly.

THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

Historical Limitations for Libraries and Librarians. Libraries from the earliest times have been limited by the contents of their collections and the wisdom and expertise of those who led them as librarians and guides. As technology has advanced, we have included in our arsenal digital databases and resources. While our collections have undoubtedly expanded, these long-standing limitations have remained in place.

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence introduces an increasing suite of capabilities and applications that enhance the capacity of libraries and librarians to overcome or even transcend some of these limitations. What has previously been inconceivable because it was either cost-prohibitive or required immense amounts of additional time or expertise is increasingly within reach.

The Strong One Under the Floor. There is a Japanese proverb, 縁の下の力持ち (*en no shita no chikara mochi*) which means, “The Strong One Under the Floor.” This is a wonderful metaphor for understanding the power and impact of libraries and librarians. Not only have libraries and librarians served as the underlying foundation of learning within our institutions, but the deep skills and practices of research and learning that come from those who

have committed themselves to the work of librarianship are more essential than ever in our emerging AI-powered future.

What is important now is that libraries and librarians begin to assert their rightful position at the center of their institutions as those who both hold up the floor (and thus the house as a whole), but who also possess the strength to lead into the future.

Fundamental Literacies and Generative Artificial Intelligence. The work of learning requires so many additional skills and literacies, particularly in our current world in which disinformation, bias, and other challenges are ever present. In our new reality, increasingly shaped by the presence and integration of generative AI in the work of research and learning, these underlying skills and literacies become simultaneously more important and in need of their own kind of enhancement. A few examples can help us to understand what I mean here by saying that AI alters the skills and literacies we need:

- Our skills of knowledge management become more important when the amount of information we can both access and engage is increased exponentially in both quantity and speed.
- Our skills in information literacy are more important as we work with new tools that are predicated upon certain forms of ranking, aggregating, and collecting information.
- Our need for critical AI literacy and proficiency will be essential in navigating this future.

TOOLS: IDENTIFY, DEPLOY, AND STACK

Identifying and Deploying Generative AI in Research and Learning. There is an innumerable array of tools that can be used in research and learning. The questions that are most important revolve around which tools and how they should be deployed. While these questions and the quantity and capabilities of our tools are perpetually evolving, there are several considerations that can help to inform our decisions and processes in using these powerful tools for research and learning.

Aligning with Values. Earlier in this workshop I shared our five policy values, which are appropriate here as a measure of the utility

and appropriateness of using generative AI tools in research and learning.

- *Transparency.* Is my work clearly and honestly represented, including the ways in which I leverage tools and technology to enhance my research and learning?
- *Rigor.* Have I used these tools as a shortcut in a way that diminishes the quality and character of my work or as a tool to enhance it?
- *Curiosity.* Have I engaged in work that explores my line of inquiry and is interested not in curtailing it, but in its increase in clarity and depth?
- *Inclusion.* Has this been used in any way that discriminates, diminishes, or elevates a person or people over others, or to expand our concern and care of others?
- *Play.* Did I engage in my work in such a way that brought joy, curiosity, and energy to my work?

Experimental and Iterative Approaches. Due to the rapidly evolving landscape of tools and overall capabilities of generative AI it is important to recognize that our processes and what we are able to accomplish are perpetually evolving. While it has been tempting in higher education (and theological education is by no means immune to this) to create relatively “stable” and “standard” research practices and habits, such an approach no longer makes sense, particularly as it relates to the adoption, deployment, and integration of AI tools in research and learning.

This means that there are three essential features of our work of research and learning that should always be under consideration:

- *We should always seek to understand and document our research and learning processes to better understand where gains with generative AI may be found.* It is essential that we very clearly identify how we do our work with as much effort as we seek to accomplish our work. This enables us to maximize our agility and to improve our research and learning.
- *We should maintain a running list of capabilities and processes that would aid us in our work as we*

regularly examine whether new tools or advancements can meet those needs or desires. The full capabilities and applications of these tools is unknown, which is why any single point-in-time measurement of their abilities is limited in its explanatory power and relevance.

- *We should recognize that oftentimes the limitations of these tools lie not necessarily in their capability, but in our use of them.* This highlights the importance of ongoing learning and training (at places like libraries), and the understanding that sometimes the outputs of these tools are arbitrary and not a reflection of the tool or its user, and therefore we must keep trying.

STACKS (Strategic Tool Assembly for Curated Knowledge Solutions).

One of the first things you will learn in using generative AI tools for research and learning is that there is no kind of omni-tool (at least not yet). To do your work in a way that brings the full benefits of these tools you will have to not only combine them but do so in the proper order. While there is no out-of-the-box process that will work for all learning and research, there are a couple of guidelines that one can use to become more proficient at knowing when tool switching and tool stacking are most strategic.

- *Only Use the Features You Need.* It can be tempting to try to take advantage of every possible feature, modality, and use case. This is often a drain on time and doesn't contribute to the overall work. Choose the right tool for the work that you want to accomplish, not the most powerful or feature-heavy option available. Biggest is not always the best.
- *Organize Your Work in AI Tools.* Create for yourself a system for the knowledge management necessary to collect and organize the work you generate with these tools. This is especially true when doing data analysis, research in databases, and strategizing on ideation, structure, and research plans. Results are only as good as your ability to find them later.
- *Spend money sparingly and strategically.* There are a lot of tools that offer premium plans. These

costs can add up quickly. You should be able to do just about everything you will need for research and learning with free, publicly available tools. The main reason that a paid subscription would be useful is to remove rate limits or unlock certain features.

- *Always use multiple iterations and attempts.* Because of the ways that these tools are built you may find that the quality of your results can be entirely arbitrary. This is why you should always try more than one way and more than one time for your work. Also, you can often ask the tool itself for strategy, or look to YouTube or X for use cases.

THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE

There are three reasons that librarians, particularly theological librarians, must assert themselves at the center of conversations in our institutions about generative artificial intelligence and the future of learning:

- *Librarians Bring Unique Expertise to Learning.* More than ever, the hard-earned wisdom, experience, and expertise of librarians are needed as we navigate our way towards the next iteration of human learning. If we outsource this to other groups within higher ed institutions (e.g., instructional design or faculty development) then both the institution and those they serve will be profoundly disadvantaged from the absence of the additional literacies and competencies that are a natural part of the work of libraries and librarians. These include things like knowledge management, information literacy, best practices in research, and information science.
- *If Not Librarians, Then Who?* The landscape of education and generative artificial intelligence is moving too fast, with too many players, for institutions to simply take a “wait and see” approach. If libraries and librarians do not actively assert themselves at the center of this conversation as its rightful guides, then the money, momentum, and energy will be

redirected elsewhere, and the library will either be left behind or become one of the sources of diverted funds and institutional commitment.

- *Librarians Bring a Human-Centered Approach to the Future.* As we move into this next step in the work of human learning and formation, it is important that we cultivate postures and practices that are explicitly human-centered. There are many competing forces that are entering into this space that are either indifferent to such an orientation or more concerned with other objectives. Leadership in this space that holds this fundamental ethical commitment is essential to the cultivation and sustaining of a world that leads further towards flourishing for the whole human family. In this moment, there is no more important call.

REFERENCES

Hanegan, Michael and Chris Rosser. 2023. "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Theological Education." <https://bit.ly/theological-education-and-ai>.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For a more comprehensive overview of this workshop with additional information, links, and resources please visit: <https://bit.ly/atla-and-ai>.

Intro to Grant Writing

Jessica Boyer, Director of the Library, Mount St. Mary's University

ABSTRACT: This workshop covered essential skills in crafting compelling grant proposals. Attendees learned to decode grant lingo, develop realistic budgets, write persuasive narratives, and overcome common application pitfalls. Practical examples from successful applications were shared, and interactive exercises fostered a collaborative learning environment. This workshop equipped attendees with the knowledge to navigate the grant writing process and secure project funding confidently.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many of our institutions and libraries have faced continual financial challenges, and many libraries have confronted significant staffing and budget cuts. One factor that may alleviate some financial pressure from our libraries is grant funding. Though it is important to stress that grants cannot be a substitution for sustained funding and stability, they can provide one-time funding for special initiatives, programs, and events. This workshop was designed to introduce Atla members to grant writing so they may more confidently and successfully pursue grant funding opportunities for their libraries.

Seven attendees, whose home institutions spanned the globe, participated in this workshop. Given the international perspectives of the group, the presenter attempted to make the workshop as applicable to all attendees as possible. Thus, less emphasis was placed on U.S.-specific opportunities, such as grants from U.S. federal agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services or the National Endowment for the Humanities. Instead, the workshop focused on funding opportunities from professional organizations such as Atla. The running activities throughout the workshop focused on aiding attendees in developing a complete draft application for the Atla Library Impact Grant. Additionally, the presenter opened the workshop by acknowledging that she is not a professional grant

writer. However, she has had much success obtaining grants for her library, and she provided an overview of her experiences while acknowledging her limitations.

WORKSHOP

Locating Opportunities

The workshop opened by discussing the different types of funders, including government (federal, state, and local), private foundations, professional associations, and corporations. We also discussed various places to look for funding opportunity announcements. In addition to subscribing to email announcements from regular funders, the presenter recommended the Library Grants blog maintained by Stephanie Gerding (<http://librarygrants.blogspot.com/>). Attendees should check if their institution or local public library subscribes to a database of grantors and opportunities, such as GrantScape.

After locating an opportunity, the discussion turned to tips for deciding whether or not a grant fits their library and project. Attendees were encouraged to first read through the qualifications and confirm if the grantor funds private or public institutions of higher education, evaluate if the library's project aligns well with the grantor's funding priorities, and determine if there were any financial restrictions, such as the grantor only funding a portion of the total project costs. Attendees were encouraged to review recent press releases on the grantor's website for examples of what the grantor recently funded. The discussion concluded by acknowledging the time commitment in writing and submitting a grant application. The group discussed ways to evaluate the potential return on investment for completing a grant application. Factors included how soon the application deadline is approaching, the grantor's funding ratio, the length and complexity of the application, and how well the applicant's project aligns with the grant opportunity.

Budgeting

While there are many approaches to grant writing, the presenter recommends budgeting first. She has found that budgeting first allows the applicant to determine early on if their numbers make sense for both the project and the opportunity. The applicant does not

waste time drafting a narrative if the budget numbers do not work. Additionally, when seeking approval to apply for a grant from institutional leaders, they often want you to show them the budget first.

The presenter provided an overview of common budget categories such as materials/supplies, equipment, salaries, consultants or contracted work, and travel expenses. She also provided a basic overview of direct versus indirect costs, with examples. While indirect costs are only common to U.S. governmental grants, the presenter wanted attendees to be familiar with this procedure.

The facilitator also discussed ways to craft a compelling budget justification. The group discussed getting quotes from vendors, providing screenshots from vendor websites, and citing credible sources that provide pricing estimates. Finally, the group discussed common budget hangups, such as the potential tax implications for awarding stipends, factoring multi-year grant budgets from projects that exceed 12 months in length, and navigating grants that require cost sharing.

Approvals

Another important aspect we discussed was the necessity of seeking institutional approvals before submitting a grant application. Each institution typically has a policy or procedure regarding accepting funding from an outside organization. Therefore, attendees must engage with their institutional leadership before applying for a grant. This ensures the institutional acceptance of the grant, if awarded, and the support for the project that the funding backed.

Narratives

The facilitator underscored the importance of crafting a compelling and persuasive grant narrative. Narratives, often structured as answers to the grantor's questions outlined in the funding opportunity, are a key tool for effectively communicating the project's value and impact. The facilitator provided examples of common questions and the strategies she has used to answer each question type, supported by examples from successful grant narratives.

Why do you need funding for this project?

The answer to this question is very situational. It may include a variety of factors, such as staffing limitations, a lack of institutional resources, or the implementation of an innovative idea that is outside the scope of the library's regular budget. One strategy is to outline the full scope of the project plan. Acknowledge what steps you have completed already with your limited resources, and then explain why external funding is needed to complete the next steps and bring the project to fruition.

Why does this project matter? What are the implications beyond the institution?

Quantitative data can be a helpful tool in projecting the potential impact of a project. What internal library data have you been collecting that could be helpful? For example, can you quantify how often researchers have used a specific special collections resource? External data sources can also be beneficial. Surveys such as those from ATS and IPEDs can be used to benchmark or demonstrate current trends in the field, and [WorldCat.org](https://www.worldcat.org) can be used to provide an estimate of the uniqueness of specific holdings. Acknowledging if your library is open to the public or other groups outside your institution can also demonstrate a broader impact.

How can the grantor trust you to be a good steward?

Grantors want to know that you will be a good steward of the funds provided to you. Answers to this question should describe your qualifications. Attendees were encouraged to list their degrees, relevant coursework, and work experience. Attendees were encouraged to acknowledge that while their institutional resources are limited, they are competent professionals with appropriate experience and training.

Depending on the nature of the actual work to be undertaken in the project, attendees may consider inviting others to join the project team. These team members may include a more senior member of library staff to serve as an advisor. It may also include relevant campus experts. For example, a grant focused on space planning might include the institution's facilities director on the project team. Or a grant focused on a specific collection might include a discipline faculty member whose research aligns with the collection's focus.

Supplemental Materials

The facilitator discussed how supplemental materials beyond the grant budget and narratives might be added to an application. Specific supplemental materials might be required for some opportunities per the opportunity guidelines. Additional materials may be optional but helpful for other opportunities if they strengthen the application. Examples of supplemental materials might include a brief resume for the project leader and a letter of support from an institutional leader. This letter can demonstrate the institution's commitment to the project and speak to the institution's intention of being a good steward of the funding. The facilitator also noted the common phrase that a photo is worth a thousand words. She provided examples of recently using photographs in grant applications to demonstrate need and illustrate the situations she described in the narrative. Relevant documentation or outcomes from previous projects can also be helpful supplemental materials. Examples of such documentation may include a report of a prior consultant or an environmental monitoring of a special collection area.

Getting the News...

That you were not awarded the grant. Attendees were encouraged to ask the grantor for feedback on their applications. Many are willing to share an application's strengths and weaknesses. Based on this feedback, applicants may consider revising and resubmitting the application during a future funding cycle. The facilitator also acknowledged that various factors might not be awarded and provided examples of grant applications she submitted that were not awarded for factors outside the strength of her project and application that were beyond her control.

That you got the grant! After being awarded a grant, the facilitator provided steps to take, including celebrating your success. Attendees were then encouraged to share the news with relevant stakeholders, including library and institutional leadership, their marketing office, and accounting. Many grantors will require the institution to write a press release or publicly acknowledge the award. Attendees should then implement the grant project according to relevant guidelines and their project plan, saving their receipts and completing reporting as required by the grantor.

ATLA GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The workshop also included a presentation by Alexis Weiss, Atla Member Engagement and Education Librarian. Alexis provided a thorough overview of Atla's many grant opportunities, including Consultation Grant, Digitization Grant, Open Educational Resources Grant, and Library Impact Grants. She provided examples of successful projects and common application pitfalls to avoid. Attendees are encouraged to visit Atla's website (<https://www.atla.com/member-benefits/>) for a full explanation of each opportunity and to apply. Questions regarding Atla's grant opportunities may be submitted to the Membership and Engagement team by emailing connect@atla.com.

CONCLUSION

This workshop provided attendees with knowledge and strategies for pursuing grant applications. The facilitator hopes this session will increase the number of members awarded grant funding and that future Atla conferences will include presentations by members on their grant-funded projects.

WORSHIP

Worship (Workshop) in a Nondenominational Tradition

Atla Annual Hymn of Praise 2024

Steve Jung, MSLS, MDiv, Associate Director of Library Services, Hope International University

ABSTRACT This in-person worship service was constructed not to be a common devotional experience, but a workshop on hymn-writing. Employing an ancient method for constructing a hymn, the participants wrote down various virtues or characteristics of God and God's activities based on those characteristics. Participants focused on virtues that were reflective of our professional lives: collecting, ordering, preserving, and making accessible knowledge and wisdom. The resulting hymn was then presented orally. After the workshop, the stanzas were collected, ordered, and are now available online. The goal of the exercise was to be intellectually stimulating and fun, but most importantly, to be worshipful.

INTRODUCTION

One of my areas of interest is the compositional approaches of first-century writers. What were students taught about rhetoric in the gymnasium, which offered intellectual and philosophical formation along with physical exercises? Rather than go over a devotion based on a text, I decided to make the worship service more of a workshop; we were going to workshop a hymn. I am not a musician, but this

was not about music — it was about an ancient form of literature. My intention was to give a little explanation of *enkomyion* (Greek, “hymn writing”; Latin, *encomium*), go over one hymn written in the New Testament that follows this style (Philippians 2.1–11, the hymn of the humility of Christ), and direct the participants in writing a hymn.

THE HANDOUT AND LESSON

The handout for the workshop includes part of one lesson, “On Encomium and Invective,” written by a first century grammarian and teacher, Aelius Theon. The gist of the lesson is that when one composes an *enkomyion* (for a person), it follows a certain pattern. When one does the same thing for a dead person, it is called an *epitaphios*, and, for a god, a hymn. First, one writes about the person’s birth. This is followed by praise for the person’s virtues and actions based upon those virtues. That would be followed by praises for the person’s appearance and health. And, lastly, one writes about the person’s luck or fortune. As we were going to praise God, we didn’t need praises about God’s appearance or health, and God isn’t “lucky.” That left us with finding virtues, or aspects of God’s character, to praise, and the deeds and actions based upon those virtues. I mentioned Johannine characteristics, such as love and light. I also mentioned the characteristics from Exodus 34:5–7: *gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, faithfulness, and forgiving*. Any of those would be wonderful to focus on, but we are a collection of librarians. I wanted us to bring attention to our librarianship: we collect, bring order, preserve, and make accessible all knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, we should focus on those aspects in God as creator of all of those things.

We took ten minutes to write down a list of virtues and deeds coming from those virtues. I had written out four simple formulaic lines to demonstrate a pattern to follow. After that silent time, I explained that we would read our “verse” of the hymn and that everyone would respond with the refrain “Your steadfast love endures forever.”

THE HYMN WE WORKSHOPPED

In person, we read our lines, one at a time. Each spoken line was followed by a refrain, “Your steadfast love endures forever.” After the closing prayer, I asked to take pictures of their worksheets, so that I could put the lines all together for preservation purposes. What follows is the lines from the participants, but I have arranged their order (because honestly there is no way that I could remember the order that they were read).

ATLA ANNUAL HYMN OF PRAISE 2024

Thank you for your compassion in providing us with companions on our journey, both intellectual and spiritual, in our desire to be closer to you.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for your compassion, because you have given us your word.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Because you are ordered, you bring order out of chaos, providing systems and continuity out of which we live and function.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for your unchangeableness, because we keep your promises.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for your truth and wisdom, because you have opened our eyes and minds.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you for your grace, because you have given us ears to hear, minds to ponder, and hearts to understand.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you, O God. For in your art, I feel whole and purposeful.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you for your Word, it is the source of life. It is powerful and the teacher of your great love.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you, God, for your knowledge, inspiring your poets, prophets, and priests.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for your charity, because you have loved us into being.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for creation, because you have made wisdom known.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you, God. In your absurdity you remain unknowable.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Praise you for your wisdom. You created the world in wisdom and guide the world to Jesus and its proper end.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Thank you, God. In your mercy you have made us aware of your salvation.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

Because of your steadfastness, you never let us go.

Your steadfast love endures forever.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND NOW

The hymn that we created now resides in a LibGuide hosted by Hope International University: https://libguides.hiu.edu/Atla_2024

The page has both the hymn and a link to a PDF of the worksheet. Feel free to use the worksheet as you wish.

REFERENCE

- Kennedy, George Alexander. 2003. "On Encomium and Invective."
In *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press.

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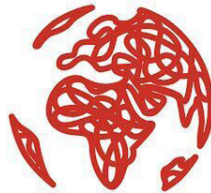


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HISTORICAL ANNUAL CONFERENCES

1947–2024

YEAR	PLACE	HOST
1947	Louisville, KY	Louisville Presbyterian Seminary
1948	Dayton, OH	Bonebrake Theological Seminary
1949	Chicago, IL	Chicago Theological Seminary
1950	Columbus, OH	Evangelical Lutheran Seminary and Capital University
1951	Rochester, NY	Colgate-Rochester Divinity School
1952	Louisville, KY	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
1953	Evanston, IL	Garrett Biblical Institute
1954	Chicago, IL	Chicago Theological Seminary
1955	New York, NY	Union Theological Seminary
1956	Berkeley, CA	Pacific School of Religion
1957	Fort Worth, TX	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
1958	Boston, MA	Boston University School of Theology
1959	Toronto, ON	Knox College
1960	St. Paul, MN	Bethel College and Seminary
1961	Washington, DC	Wesley Theological Seminary
1962	Hartford, CT	Hartford Seminary Foundation
1963	Mill Valley, CA	Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
1964	Kansas City, MI	St. Paul School of Theology
1965	New York, NY	General Theological Seminary
1966	Louisville, KY	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
1967	Chicago, IL	McCormick Theological Seminary

YEAR	PLACE	HOST
1968	St. Louis, MO	Concordia Seminary
1969	Pittsburgh, PA	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
1970	New Orleans, LA	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
1971	Pasadena, CA	Pasadena College
1972	Waterloo, ON	Waterloo Lutheran University
1973	Bethlehem, PA	Moravian Theological Seminary
1974	Denver, CO	Iliff School of Theology
1975	S. Hamilton, MA	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
1976	Grand Rapids, MI	Calvin Theological Seminary
1977	Vancouver, BC	Vancouver School of Theology
1978	Latrobe, PA	Saint Vincent College
1979	New Brighton, MN	Bethel Theological Seminary
1980	Denver, CO	Iliff School of Theology
1981	St. Louis, MO	Christ Seminary — Seminex
1982	Toronto, ON	Toronto School of Theology
1983	Richmond, VA	United Theological Seminary in Virginia
1984	Holland, MI	Western Theological Seminary
1985	Madison, NJ	Drew University
1986	Kansas City, KS	Rockhurst College
1987	Berkeley, CA	Graduate Theological Union
1988	Wilmore, KY	Asbury Theological Seminary
1989	Columbus, OH	Trinity Lutheran Seminary
1990	Evanston, IL	Garrett-Evangelical Seminary and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary
1991	Toronto, ON	University of Toronto, Trinity College, and Toronto School of Theology
1992	Dallas, TX	Southern Methodist University
1993	Vancouver, BC	Vancouver School of Theology, Regent College, and Carey Theological College
1994	Pittsburgh, PA	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry

YEAR	PLACE	HOST
1995	Nashville, TN	Divinity Library of Vanderbilt University and Tennessee Theological Library Association
1996	Denver, CO	Iliff School of Theology
1997	Boston, MA	Boston University and Boston Theological Institute
1998	Leesburg, VA	Virginia Theological Seminary and Washington Theological Consortium
1999	Chicago, IL	Atla and Association of Chicago Theological Schools
2000	Berkeley, CA	Graduate Theological Union
2001	Durham, NC	Divinity School at Duke University
2002	St. Paul, MN	Minnesota Theological Library Association
2003	Portland, OR	Mount Angel Abbey, George Fox Seminary, Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Western Seminary
2004	Kansas City, MO	Kansas City Area Theological Library Association
2005	Austin, TX	Southwest Area Theological Library Association
2006	Chicago, IL	Atla
2007	Philadelphia, PA	Southeastern Pennsylvania Theological Library Association
2008	Ottawa, ON	Saint Paul University
2009	St. Louis, MO	St. Louis Theological Consortium Libraries
2010	Louisville, KY	The Theological Education Association of Mid-America
2011	Chicago, IL	Chicago Area Theological Library Association and Association of Chicago Theological Schools
2012	Scottsdale, AZ	Theological Library Cooperative of Arizona
2013	Charlotte, NC	Carolinas Theological Library Consortium
2014	New Orleans, LA	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
2015	Denver, CO	Theological Librarians and Libraries of Denver/Rocky Mountain Region
2016	Long Beach, CA	The Southern California Theological Library Association

YEAR	PLACE	HOST
2017	Atlanta, GA	Columbia Theological Seminary, Erskine Theological Seminary, Mercer University, McAfee School of Theology, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, The Interdenominational Theological Center
2018	Indianapolis, IN	Asbury Seminary and Concordia Theological Seminary
2019	Vancouver, BC	Regent College
2020	Online	
2021	Online	
2022	Baltimore, MD	Mount St. Mary's University
2023	Fort Worth, TX	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southwest Area Theological Library Association (SWATLA)
2024	Long Beach, CA	Southern California Theological Library Association

