

Two Hurricanes and Four Months in the Life of a New Editor-in-Chief

Our outgoing editor-in-chief Christa Strickler wrote in her editorial for Volume 32, Number 3 (2024) issue of *TCB: Technical Services in Religion & Theology*, “I also believe that theological libraries can learn from the broader library community and vice versa.” Christa’s belief was, indeed, apt, prescient, and practical.

As I move into the editor-in-chief position, I join our Atla publishing and reading community in thanking Christa for her leadership of—and invaluable contributions to—our journal and am personally grateful for her generous help with the transition.

I accepted the role of editor-in-chief for *TCB*, because I see this as a significant opportunity to serve my profession by giving back to an organization that has supported my own professional development. Atla databases and publications served my research needs admirably in the field of medieval preaching, scholasticism, and biblical exegesis. Atla’s commitment to promoting scholastic excellence and the professional development of library staff is a noble and worthwhile endeavor. I am not alone in this sentiment. I am fortunate to be surrounded by a talented editorial board comprising Barnaby Hughes, Brinna Michael, Nicholas Friesner and Tim Hasin, who, when the rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds of hurricanes Milton and Helene blew, faithfully carried out their duties, while I was busy boarding up my house in Manatee County, Florida. It was evident early on that this journal was built on the rock-solid foundation of an impressive editorial board.

Milton and Helene had given short shrift to the words of my realtor, who assured me that I would never need the hurricane shutters that came with my house, nor to the local hurricane legend that claimed the Seminole Tribe of Florida had cast a protective, blessing spell to protect Sarasota Bay from hurricanes. Undeterred, both storms nonetheless made landfall in Sarasota Bay.

The two hurricanes, striking as they did back-to-back, disrupted our customary duties in technical services, forcing us out of the comfort that inveterate, daily routine lulls one into. We storm-proofed the libraries and readied ourselves. The storms’ dual power resulted in billions of dollars of property loss. My staff and I were called to canvass the neighborhoods, to look in on the residents of the county—especially the hardest hit areas, including mobile-home communities. Roofs were stripped off, twisted metal was strewn everywhere, and residents were thirsty and hungry—as they awaited FEMA’s arrival. On three occasions, I called for an ambulance to save the lives of isolated, chronically ill, and abandoned homeowners. While it may come as a surprise to many outside the library community, the majority of county employees canvassing the neighborhood were Manatee County librarians. This experience impressed upon us all that, during good times and bad, we are persistently at the service of our community. This mandate is especially stark when we are forced out of our comfort zone to fulfill our civic obligations.

I am committed to contributing to the journal’s continued excellence and guiding its future direction. And, while I am intent on advancing the good work my predecessor achieved, it is also true that the sensibilities and vision of every editor-in-chief embosses his or her stamp on the form of the journal. It is in this spirit that I share a bit about my preliminary ideas for the journal’s future.

To achieve its full potential, *TCB* should endeavor to embrace and explore new areas of high-impact topics and to encourage new voices and perspectives. Toward this end, we will aim to redouble efforts to widen—and deepen—our author and reader base by expanding content and diversifying our voices on topics that are beneficial to our profession.

So, what initiatives are already underway?

We are inaugurating a new section called “Looking Ahead”. We invite librarians in positions of leadership—or those who are recognized as leaders writ large—to be interviewed about their visions for the future direction of technical services over, say, the next three years, and to share with us how recent and planned initiatives and processes support future technological innovation and strategies.

I am asking all our members active in publishing to submit at least one manuscript to *TCB* this year, or encourage a colleague to do so, which I am calling The Publish or Perish Challenge for 2025.

I am also interested in exploring new directions and opportunities together with you. Your contributions are critical to the success of *TCB* and will ensure our publication is as inspiring, forward-looking—and useful—as possible. I wholly welcome any and all ideas, so please do not hesitate to share them with me and our editorial board.

I, along with my team, wish everyone a happy new year.

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