



THEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARIANSHIP

An Online Journal of the American Theological Library Association

ISSN 1937-8904

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1 • OCTOBER 2017

---

An open access journal publishing essays, columns, critical reviews, bibliographic essays, and peer-reviewed articles on various aspects of theological librarianship and its contribution to theological education.

# Table of Contents

## Editorial

<i>Editorial Board Introductions</i> .....	iii-iv
--	--------

## Columns

Jane Lenz Elder • <i>Finding Time to Write</i> .....	1
--	---

## Essays

Dann Wigner • <i>Librarianship as a Spiritual Practice</i> .....	2-4
Carli Spina • <i>Libraries and Universal Design</i> .....	5-7
Beth Sheppard • <i>Theological Librarian vs. Machine: on the Amazon Alexa Show (with Some Reflections on the Future of the Profession)</i> .....	8-23

## Special Forum

Jennifer Woodruff Tait • <i>Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access</i> .....	24
Brad Ost • <i>Better Standards for OA Journals</i> .....	25-26
Barnaby Hughes • <i>Peer-reviewing the Publishers: the Scholarly Open Access Appeals Board, 2013-2016</i> .....	27-32
Gary Daught • <i>Religious Studies Journals in Beall's List</i> .....	33-39
Andrew Keck • <i>How Theological Librarianship Came to Be, and Came to Be Open-Access</i> .....	40
Lisa Gonzalez • <i>Launching an Open Access Journal - Can You Make the Investment?</i> .....	41-42

## Critical Reviews

Bo Adams • <i>Academic Libraries and Toxic Leadership</i> .....	43-44
Jason Fowler • <i>An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek</i> .....	45
Barnaby Hughes • <i>Cruising the Library</i> .....	46-47
Shanéé Yvette Murrain • <i>The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology</i> .....	48-49
Beth Sheppard • <i>Reading for Faith and Learning</i> .....	50-52



# THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIANSHIP

An Online Journal of the American Theological Library Association

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1 • OCTOBER 2017  
ISSN 1937-8904

## Editorial Board

Jennifer Woodruff Tait, Editor-in-Chief, *Theological Librarianship*

Barnaby Hughes, American Theological Library Association

Keegan Osinski, Divinity Library Vanderbilt University

Dr. Christopher J. Anderson, Yale University

Richard “Bo” Adams, Pitts Theology Library

## Advisory Board

Jason Christopher Fowler, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Jennifer Bartholomew, Sacred Heart Seminary & School of Theology

Odile Dupont, BETH

Teresa Cardin Ellis, Baptist, United States

Alvaro Perez Guzman, Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana, Costa Rica

Mary Linden Sepulveda, Seattle University

Mariel de Luca Voth, Fuller Theological Seminary

## Journal information

The purposes of *Theological Librarianship* are: to foster the professional development of theological librarians and to contribute to and enrich the profession of theological librarianship.

*TL* publishes essays, columns, critical reviews, bibliographic essays, and peer-reviewed articles on all aspects of professional librarianship, within the context of a religious/theological library collection encompassing interactions with faculty and administrators engaged in religious/theological education. The primary intended audience includes: professional librarians in colleges, universities, and theological seminaries and others with an interest in theological librarianship

Further information, including Author Guidelines and instructions on how to submit manuscripts, is available at the journal web site [www.theolib.org](http://www.theolib.org).



## Editorial Board Introductions

Greetings from the new editorial board of *Theological Librarianship*. Since there are some new faces, we thought we'd take a few moments to introduce ourselves.

But first, we must thank Suzanne Estelle-Holmer and Miranda Bennett for their service on the Board during the preparation of this issue. We wish them great success in their new roles, Suzanne on the ATLA Board of Directors and Miranda as editor of the *Proceedings*.



### Richard "Bo" Adams

I'm Richard "Bo" Adams, and I have a BA in Computer Science and Economics from Dartmouth College, an MTS from Candler, a ThM from Columbia Theological Seminary, a PhD from Emory, and, most recently, an MLIS from the University of Alabama. My first task on staff in a theology library was to read back issues of *Theological Librarianship*. I learned from the journal the rich past and bright future of my new vocation. I arrived at Pitts Theology Library with dual training in computer science and biblical studies — not your typical career path for a theological librarian. What I have found, though, is that practicing librarianship provides daily opportunities to explore how technology has and will shift the practice and study of theology. The journal helped me begin to understand these complexities of our field

when I was new, and now I look within the pages of the journal for new ideas about how my library can innovate.

I have read *TL* as an outsider and an insider, and it is my hope that the journal will continue to benefit those who work within theological libraries and also those who may not. To do this, the journal needs to continue to document our rich past as a guild, but also look forward and continually reassess what it means to serve patrons in the twenty-first century. We all recognize that librarianship continues to change. But our field as a particular vocational calling is also changing, not merely due to shifting technologies, but also due to shifting demographics, denominational structures, and theological and philosophical commitments. I envision the journal as a place of conversation about these shifts, where we within the field can help each other understand what is happening, but also help those who approach from the outside better understand the growing importance and complexity of our work.



### Chris Anderson

I'm Chris Anderson, and I'm Special Collections Librarian and Curator of the Day Missions Collection at Yale University Divinity School. I have a MSLIS from Syracuse University and a PhD in American Religious History from Drew University. For the past decade, I worked as Head of Special Collections, Archives and Methodist Librarian at Drew University. Prior to my career in librarianship I served as a minister, professor, and baseball coach. I've published two books along with several book chapters, articles and reviews, was founder and editor of the *International Journal of Religion and Sport*, and am on the Editorial Board for *Methodist History*. My research interests include outreach strategies in academic and theological libraries, the history of Christianity in the United States, and the study of popular culture (with particular

interests in the history of missions, film studies, and the intersections of Christianity and material culture.) After having served on the advisory board of *Theological Librarianship* for several years I wanted to get more involved in the nuts and bolts of the open access publication. I am particularly interested in locating and shepherding new authors toward publication.



### **Barnaby Hughes**

I'm Barnaby Hughes, currently working as a *CPLI*® Metadata Analyst at the American Theological Library Association. I have a BA in History from California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo and worked in the library there “putting stickers on books” (barcodes, spine labels, etc.) and later copy cataloging. I studied abroad during my junior year at the University of Bristol, which I enjoyed so much that I soon returned and completed an MA in Medieval Studies. After that, I spent five years living in a Benedictine monastery and acquired a STB from Blackfriars, Oxford, via the Angelicum in Rome. I then briefly pursued a PhD in History at Bristol before returning to California. For a few years I wrote about wine (and opera on the side), got a MLIS from San Jose State University, and edited its student library journal. As a library student I was introduced to

ATLA through the class “Theological Librarianship” offered by the University of Illinois.

I'm grateful that at ATLA I can combine my diverse experiences and interests in writing, editing, publishing, librarianship, theology, and history. As an editor, I look forward to broadening the content of *Theological Librarianship*, facilitating the exchange of ideas, promoting scholarly communication in religion and theology, and nurturing the next generation of writer librarians.



### **Keegan Osinski**

I'm Keegan Osinski, and I'm the Critical Reviews Editor for *Theological Librarianship*. I have my BA in Philosophy and Theology from Point Loma Nazarene University and my MLIS from the University of Washington. I'm halfway through the Master of Theological Studies program at Vanderbilt Divinity School, and I work in Public Services in the Vanderbilt Divinity Library. I think scholarship is an integral part of librarianship, and I'm enthusiastic about getting librarians engaged in scholarly writing, for the good of their libraries and of the field. I'm keen to publish timely and thoughtful insight about new publications coming down the pike.



### **Jennifer Woodruff Tait**

I'm Jennifer Woodruff Tait, editor-in-chief of *Theological Librarianship*. I have an MDiv and MA from Asbury Theological Seminary, an MLIS from the University of Illinois, and a PhD in Religion from Duke University. I have been the editor of *Christian History* magazine since 2012, and also do web content management for the Theology of Work Project, an online Bible commentary. I have previously worked for the libraries of Drew University, Duke Divinity School, and Asbury, doing mainly reference and special collections work. I have been involved with ATLA for seventeen years, and interested in working at the intersection between libraries and religious communication for as long as I can remember. I want to respect the rich history of *TL* (I have served on the advisory board since its inception) while continuing to broaden its coverage of library topics and its reach into the scholarly community.

Bo Adams  
Chris Anderson  
Barnaby Hughes  
Keegan Osinski  
Jennifer Woodruff Tait

## Finding Time to Write

by Jane Lenz Elder

At the ATLA pre-conference in Atlanta this year, I attended the open session about writing for *Theological Librarianship*. A wide variety of people came and went. All of them had a desire to write, but their common lament was the inability to find time to do it. Given that I am a woman of strong opinions, statements of this sort plunge me into a weird sort of bifurcated mental frenzy because each of these good folks is absolutely right. And absolutely wrong.

Of all the platitudes that exist about writing, the one ringing truest is — with apologies to Nike — “Just Do It.” Take five minutes here and twenty minutes there and put some words on paper. It is really that easy. Seize the idle and semi-idle moments that fill your day and write something. Wake up fifteen minutes early or go to sleep fifteen minutes later and use that time to write something. Stop reading the headlines of the *National Enquirer* as you wait in the grocery line — we already know that Susan Lucci is a space alien who abducted the Princess of Wales — and write something.

The remnants of time we throw away waiting for a meeting to begin or stuck in traffic can create glorious patchworks of words that one day might actually amount to something publishable. I say this as someone who wrote the introduction to her first book in an elementary school carpool line. Time, tide, and the need to pick up the kids at school are relentless in their regularity. That fifteen minutes sitting quietly in the car every...single...day eventually yielded, not exactly a masterpiece, but a history thesis I could present to the committee in galley sheets.

This way of writing cannot be considered glamorous. It involves no pipes, cardigan sweaters with elbow patches, or windows overlooking serene autumnal landscapes. Grasping time in this way leaves little room for stroking one's beard and looking sagacious — which is how I hit upon this method in the first place. I was a full-time university staff member with two small children when I began graduate work in history. A professor in the research methods course — who has now gone to meet his maker (and I swear I had nothing to do with it) — invited each of us to suggest ways of doing research that the others might find useful. When I suggested keeping a notepad to write down ideas that occurred to you while doing weekly errands he rose from his chair in six feet of New Haven indignation, sniffed, and said, “You must come from the Donna Reed school of Historiography.” Then he poured everyone a glass of sherry and explained the *right* way to do graduate work. In his mind it involved long hours of reading and contemplation amongst like-minded colleagues — like cloistered monks, but with a faculty club and martinis.

And that attitude, I realized, is the trouble. Writing is not for the elected few. Writing does not require long stretches of quiet time. Or just the right ink, custom-sized index cards, and an office dripping with literary atmosphere and breathless secretaries. These are myths perpetrated by the movies and old-school Ivy League tweedy professors. What you do need is determination to get it done and a great deal of organizational planning.

Organizational sessions actually require a couple of uninterrupted hours every so often. These are where you create an outline, set your daily word-count goals, and break your upcoming work into short topical chunks to be assembled later. Knowing where you are headed in this way is essential for cultivating the ability to pick up and leave off somewhat abruptly. Furthermore, before you stop for the day, you must leave the way clear for yourself, so that you are excited to return to your work and know exactly what you are going to do next. Leaving your work in a snarl to face the next day is the cruelest and most effective form of self-sabotage going. The next most effective way of sabotaging yourself is letting your work grow cold, which is the beauty of writing in short bursts every day; you don't lose time retreading old ground trying to remember what you meant to say. Or why.

I invite you to give this method a try. Consider doing a short article for *Theological Librarianship* that draws on your expertise. Write a little every day for the next few weeks and you'll be surprised at how easy it is to come up with something substantial. Then send it in.

---

Jane Lenz Elder is the author of several articles, books, and a blog — very few of which have anything to do with theology. She is the Reference Librarian at Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.



## Librarianship as a Spiritual Practice

As a profession, librarianship often suffers from negative stereotypes, lack of visibility, and dismissive attitudes. Yet, that's a view from the outside looking in (and a negative look at that). How do we conceive of ourselves? *What drives us as librarians? Why are we here?* While I'm sure that the answers to those pertinent questions are as nuanced as the richly textured individuals who staff our libraries, there has to be some hint of a common answer.

These questions naturally lead us to the philosophy of librarianship, stemming back, at least, to Ranganathan's five "immutable" laws: (1) books are for use, (2) every reader has his or her book, (3) every book has its reader, (4) save the time of the reader, and (5) the library is a growing organism.<sup>1</sup> These principles provide a philosophical foundation for librarianship — the basic *doctrine* of our profession, if you will — but where is the soul? I think we can gain a needed layer of depth if we look at what we do as a spiritual practice.

Yet, how does the spiritual practice of librarianship mesh with the day-to-day tedium of MARC records, the frustrations of "problem patrons," the endless cycle of meetings, and the new initiatives we have to dream up just to get people in the doors?

We can choose to see the world as a grey mass of uninteresting requests and high expectations, or we can choose to see the world around us, in the words of Teilhard de Chardin, as gradually becoming "luminous from within."<sup>2</sup> So, before we embark on investigating librarianship as a spiritual practice, we must decide — we must *commit* — to seeing ourselves as spiritual beings, investing meaning and worth into our actions. From that perspective, then, what practices might inform our spiritual view of librarianship? There are multiple spiritual practices that are promising; here, I suggest a look at the connections that librarianship on a spiritual level might have with the practice of the presence of God, mindfulness, and — most fruitfully — *lectio Divina*. Admittedly, with the exception of mindfulness, the practices that I will outline are most applicable to librarians from the Christian tradition; however, these practices are still suitable for librarians from other religious backgrounds with minimal adjustment of the object of focus. The first two practices are essentially relevant to any task one performs, whether in a library or not, but I offer a version of the final practice that is tailored specifically to the library context.

Our first stop on this path of investigation is commonly known as "the practice of the presence of God." This specific mystic practice can be traced to two particular individuals. The first, and primary, individual to define the practice of the presence of God was the sixteenth-century monk Brother Lawrence. In his small book *The Practice of the Presence of God*, he outlined his method of viewing every opportunity and activity of the day as a potential moment of intimacy and prayer with God.<sup>3</sup> Through his own experience of washing dishes in his monastery, Brother Lawrence described the basics of this practice quite simply as the awareness in each moment that "He [God] is by your side, over you, around and in you."<sup>4</sup> Jean-Pierre de Caussade, an eighteenth-century French Jesuit, advocated a similar activity in which a practitioner understood each and every moment as a sacrament in which the grace of God could be communicated to a participant and that participant could communicate with God.<sup>5</sup> In order to view this practice with regard to librarianship, you might try the following method:

---

<sup>1</sup> S.R. Ranganathan, *The Five Laws of Library Science* (Madras: The Madras Library Association, 1931). Cf. Richard A. Leiter, "Reflections on Ranganathan's 'Five Laws of Library Science'." *Law Library Journal* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 414.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Faricy, *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God with Spiritual Maxims* (Grand Rapids, MI: Spire Books, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, trans. by Kitty Muggerridge (New York: HarperOne, 1989).

---

Dann Wigner is adjunct professor of religious studies at Middle Tennessee State University and the Instruction and Information Literacy Librarian at The University of the South, Sewanee, TN.

1. Set aside time for a specific, defined activity. Catalog a book, help a patron, create a LibGuide, update your library's Facebook page, or even just take notes in a meeting. The most common activities are the perfect context for the practice of the presence of God. Practicing the presence of God is essentially the process of paying *attention* to spiritual things right here, right now. Ponder how the mundane tasks of your life can be prayer.
2. Pray like Brother Lawrence: "Lord of all pots and pans and things, make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates!" You might also adapt this prayer to the life of the librarian: "Lord of books, articles, and all information, make me a saint by answering questions and all manner of categorization!"
3. Designate a simple prayer word of action rather than a longer prayer. For instance, pray the word *here* every so often during your day — just to remind yourself that God is right here, right now.

There is not necessarily a "right" or "wrong" way to practice the presence of God, so don't feel bound by these instructions. You can feel free to vary the method according to your own personal preferences. While this option may be perfect for some engaged in librarianship, it might not resonate with others, particularly if you do not locate yourself within the Christian tradition, but it is far from the only option.

Another possible spiritual practice for librarians is mindfulness meditation. The term *mindfulness* has been created to define a set of meditation practices that are common among many different religious and spiritual traditions. While the most direct source of this spiritual practice is the Buddhist tradition, parallel versions appear in every major world religion. Additionally, mindfulness has become popular in a generic form which does not specifically tie it to a particular metaphysical worldview. The practice that I will describe here is generic in this sense. Mindfulness also has great potential for simple relaxation and stress reduction, even if no spiritual goal is intended by the practitioner. The following practice is based on the "body scan" described by Jon Kabat-Zinn,<sup>6</sup> but there are many variations of mindfulness practice. Still, we have to start somewhere, so try this method:

1. As you are performing a task that does not require great concentration and does not have too much possibility for interruption (at least until you get used to the practice), gently let your attention settle on your breath, "riding the waves" of your own breathing with full awareness for the full length of inhaling and exhaling.
2. Take a few moments to feel your entire body as a whole, the "envelope" of your skin.
3. Bring your attention directly to your task and, more specifically, to the part of your body performing that task. As you direct your attention there, see if you can direct or channel your breathing to that space as well, so that it feels as if you are inhaling *into* your hands, for instance, and exhaling *from* your hands. It may take a while for you to get the hang of this so that it doesn't feel forced or contrived. The point of the practice is not to do it perfectly but to simply bring your attention to exactly what you are doing right here, right now.
4. Allow yourself to *feel* any and all sensations, and if you don't feel anything at the moment, that is fine too. Allow yourself to feel "not feeling anything."
5. Also, bring your mind back to the breath and to the region you are focusing on each time you notice that your attention has wandered off, after first taking note of what carried you away in the first place or what is on your mind when you realize it has wandered away from the focus on the body.
6. In this way, continue maintaining the focus on your breath and on the sensations within the individual regions as you come to them, breathe with them, and let go of them.

These simple practices are designed to help us bring back our attention to the present and to the wonders that pass us by every day because we have such a difficult time just paying attention. Still, these are spiritual practices intended to seek

---

<sup>6</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Bantam Books, 2013), 77-79.



God, the Ultimate, or cosmic balance as we go through practically *any* task in life. There is nothing in these practices that make them specific to librarianship. How can we practice something more specific?

Let's take a look at *lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina*, or sacred/divine reading, is a mystic practice that specifically deals with sacred texts, usually the Bible. In this practice, a participant selects a portion of a reading and then reads through it multiple times. Each reading has a specific purpose beyond comprehending the historical meaning of the text. The practice helps one to meditate on scripture, or any chosen spiritual book, in order for one to meet God. *Lectio* typically has three or four steps, and they follow this general pattern:

1. The first stage of the practice is *lectio*. In this stage, choose a passage and read it slowly and repetitively. You may choose a different reading for each session.
2. The second step is *oratio*. In this stage, the passage should be read aloud. Focus on what God is saying to you. Look for a specific word or phrase that stands out to you.
3. The third stage of *lectio* is *meditatio*. In this stage, concentrate on the word or phrase that stood out to you when you were reading. Focus on how God could be speaking to you today through this word or phrase. Then end your prayer time with the Lord's Prayer or another personally meaningful prayer, and keep meditating on the word or phrase that stood out to you from your reading throughout the day.
4. The final stage of *lectio* is *contemplatio*. This stage is something the individual cannot control. This is where God meets you, and it can happen any time or anywhere. The process of *lectio* helps one to be attentive to those "eureka" moments when an insight strikes you suddenly because God is not necessarily limited to showing up in burning bushes.

You may be thinking that this spiritual practice is all well and good, but how is it specific to librarianship? After all, it's only a misconception that we spend all of our days reading books. I propose that we adapt this method as the basis for our own practice, for *bibliothecarius Divina* (sacred librarianship), perhaps?

The first three stages — *lectio*, *oratio*, and *meditatio*, or more naturally, *reading*, *speaking*, and *concentrating* — could be seen as the routine of our daily tasks. These disciplines of librarianship can be likened to the ways we breathe in and out as we wait on God or the Ultimate. These tasks of waiting are inextricably linked to our philosophy of librarianship. They are the ways in which we are seeking to "save the time of the reader" no matter what our particular assignment in the library might be. These tasks are not simply "going through the motions" because we are committing ourselves through them to the belief, the philosophical underpinning, that each person might only be one good book or piece of information away from their destination on their journey toward discovery and truth — *maybe just one!*

As for the last stage of our spiritual practice, it is a bit like *contemplatio* in *lectio Divina*. We are not entirely in control of it. However, we do have a little more tangibility in our spiritual practice than in typical *lectio*. When we put a seeking person in touch with the information they request (or give them what they are really looking for, even if they request something else), that is the moment of spiritual climax in our practice of librarianship. The moment a patron asks for help in research, interlibrary loan, a particular author's works, etc., that is our moment of *contemplatio*, of helping them, even just a bit, on the road toward truth.

Now, must we look at librarianship with such subtlety and sublimity? No, of course not. We can view it simply as a job, a means to an end, a paycheck. However, we run the risk of missing the potential joy deep within ourselves if we don't view librarianship as something more. We may miss the opportunity to touch spiritually a deep insight — that truth is ever at our finger tips all around us, but it is as expansive as the universe itself. *What drives us as librarians? Why are we here?* We are here to seek truth and to help others as they seek truth, *if* we choose to see librarianship as a spiritual practice, as our unique spiritual practice.

## **Libraries and Universal Design**

Libraries of all sizes and types serve diverse populations of patrons. Patrons may have disabilities, may not speak English as their first language, may be elderly, may have limited experience in a library setting, or may have other traits or characteristics that impact the way that they interact with library spaces and services. Staff at many libraries have come to understand the importance of accessibility for individuals with disabilities, both due to legal requirements and because of the growing number of students with disabilities at their institutions.<sup>1</sup> However, this approach often results in accommodations that only address the needs of a narrow subset of patrons and do not create an inclusive community. Universal Design offers an alternative approach for creating a welcoming and usable environment for all patrons. Adopting Universal Design principles can help to address the issues many theological libraries face due to aging facilities and spaces, while also opening religious and theological content to the widest possible audience.

### **Universal Design**

Developed as an architectural concept by Ronald L. Mace,<sup>2</sup> Universal Design offers a way of thinking about all types of design that focuses on ensuring ease of access for every user no matter their circumstance. In 1997, seven principles were developed to guide those interested in applying Universal Design to their own work:

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive Use
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and Space for Approach and Use<sup>3</sup>

Each of these principles centers the user in the decision-making process and acknowledges the fact that every library patron is unique in a myriad of ways.

At their heart, these principles help to ensure that flexibility, simplicity, intuitiveness, and usability are considered at each step during the design process. Examples of design choices that adhere to these principles abound. One example is the curb cuts seen at many sidewalk intersections, which provide easy access for those who use wheelchairs, parents pushing strollers, and people pushing carts. Buildings that offer ramps at the main entrance, rather than stairs at the main entrance and a completely separate route for those with mobility disabilities, are another similar example. Fixtures can also be designed with these principles in mind, such as lever doorknobs, which require less manual dexterity and strength than doorknobs that require users to grip and twist the knob and panel light switches.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2011-2012, 11.1 percent of students at postsecondary institutions stated that they had a disability. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2014 (2016-006), Table 311.10, accessed June 29, 2017, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_311.10.asp?referrer=report](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_311.10.asp?referrer=report).

<sup>2</sup> "Ronald L. Mace," The Center for Universal Design, accessed June 29, 2017, [https://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about\\_us/usronmace.htm](https://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_us/usronmace.htm).

<sup>3</sup> "The 7 Principles," National Disability Authority, accessed June 29, 2017, <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>.

---

Carli Spina is the Head Librarian for Assessment & Outreach at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA.

Though Universal Design offers a helpful guide for design projects, it is important to acknowledge its limitations as well. As the Institute for Human Centered Design notes,

[i]t could be interpreted to promise an impossible standard. No matter how committed the designer and how attentive to anticipating all users, there would always be a small number of people for whom an individual design just wouldn't work. More accurately, Universal Design is an orientation to design in which designers strive to incorporate features that make each design more universally usable. Universal Design is broad and not tailored to the individual.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure that the best results are achieved, it is key to involve users with disabilities in the design process and to carefully manage the competing priorities to ensure that the final product is useable for the broadest possible group of users. In addition, it is vital to acknowledge that Universal Design will often be part of an overall approach that incorporates individual accommodations as well. In libraries, this means ensuring that the library has policies pertaining to accessibility, accommodation, and the role of Universal Design in projects. However, as part of a coordinated effort, Universal Design can lead to solutions that are more seamlessly usable and inclusive for the widest possible range of patrons.

### **Bringing Universal Design to Libraries**

There are many ways that Universal Design principles can be applied in library projects of all sizes. The seven principles of Universal Design can provide a framework for evaluating or changing any spaces, programs, or services at any library. Though the most obvious time to apply Universal Design principles may be during large-scale renovation projects, the principles can be applied in many other settings by explicitly considering the diverse needs of all patrons.

For example, when purchasing furniture and fixtures, these principles can offer a framework for evaluation with a focus on flexibility and accessibility. This can have a real impact on decisions. Perhaps an adjustable table offers more options for a wider range of users than a standard table while also being useful for a broader range of programs and activities. Shelves can be evaluated as to whether they meet the needs of elderly patrons who can't easily bend down to reach low shelves, and those who use wheelchairs and may not be able to reach high shelves.

In the case of signage, the integration of symbols alongside text might be more easily perceived by a number of groups: those with visual disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language, and those who are simply distracted. Similar approaches can be applied to web design projects to ensure that library websites are accessible, readable by those with low vision, and comprehensible for patrons at various reading and attention levels. Even small changes to the way that library services and workspaces are configured can help to make sure that they allow for flexible and equitable use by all users when considered from a Universal Design perspective.

### **Universal Design for Learning**

The concept of Universal Design has also been very influential in the field of education. In the 1990s, Anne Meyer and David Rose developed the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which “drew upon neuroscience and education research, and leveraged the flexibility of digital technology to design learning environments that from the outset offered options for diverse learner needs.”<sup>5</sup> This framework offers principles for bringing Universal Design to the classroom. Specifically, Meyer and Rose set forth three central principles:

- Provide multiple means of engagement (the “why” of learning)
- Provide multiple means of representation (the “what” of learning)
- Provide multiple means of action and expression (the “how” of learning)<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> “History of Universal Design,” Institute for Human Centered Design, accessed June 29, 2017, <https://www.humancentereddesign.org/universal-design/history-universal-design>.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Meyer, David Howard Rose, and David T. Gordon, *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice* (Wakefield, MA: CAST Professional Publishing, 2014), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Meyer, Rose, and Gordon, *Universal Design for Learning*, 51.

UDL offers interesting possibilities for both formal and informal educational settings, making it particularly relevant to libraries, which often offer both formal and informal instruction. As with Universal Design, each of these principles is focused on offering flexibility so that all students can equitably and meaningfully participate in all learning opportunities. Moreover, as with Universal Design, implementing this framework can benefit everyone, not just students with disabilities.

Each of these principles emphasizes autonomy and empowers students to learn in the way that is best suited to their specific needs. When offered multiple means of engagement, students have an opportunity to find their own personal motivation and develop a more genuine relationship to the materials. When offered multiple means of representation, students can determine how they learn best (for example, by choosing between audio, video, or printed content) and can learn strategies for processing information that will serve them well beyond the classroom. When offered multiple means of action and expression, students can develop their own goals and strategies for demonstrating their knowledge in a way that is meaningful to them and fulfills their needs.

These principles can be equally applicable in developing a semester-long information literacy course and an online tutorial. For each of the principles, the National Center on Universal Design for Learning offers guidelines that provide more details for educators interested in applying this framework to their own work,<sup>7</sup> and this resource demonstrates the many ways that the principles can be applied in varied educational settings. Taken together, the application of these principles can lead to more accessible, meaningful, and engaging curricula.

## Conclusion

Universal Design, and the related Universal Design for Learning framework, offer a new way to develop and further improve library spaces, services, and programs to become more inclusive and welcoming to the broadest community of patrons by going beyond a focus on accommodating the needs of individuals with specific disabilities. The principles can be applied to virtually all of the work done throughout a library and offer a consistent way of ensuring that diverse patron and student needs continue to be at the forefront of decision-making in the library.

---

<sup>7</sup> “UDL Guidelines - Version 2.0,” National Center on Universal Design for Learning, accessed June 29, 2017, <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines>.

## ***Theological Librarian vs. Machine: Taking on the Amazon Alexa Show (with Some Reflections on the Future of the Profession)***

Entertainer Harry Belafonte released a version of the popular American folk song *John Henry* through RCA Records in the mid 1950s. According to the lyrics, at some point early in the industrial era Henry, a “steel-driving man,” pitted his muscles and physical endurance against a rudimentary steam drill. Although he pulled ahead at the outset when the primitive machine experienced a mechanical glitch, he literally worked himself to death during the competition. Knowing what was at stake in terms of job security and the future ability to earn a livelihood, his indomitable wife, Pollyanna, took up the sledge hammer to finish the contest.

The message of the song was clear: there was no holding back industrialization. Inevitably, history proved, twentieth-century foundries and factories, mines and mills implemented the steam drill and other machines besides. This didn’t necessarily spell doom for all of the displaced workers. Instead, they undertook training, and pivoted from manually laying track or other labor-intensive jobs to operating the myriad machines that enterprising inventors spawned.

The song seems to take on new relevance in the early twenty-first century. Belafonte’s recording calls to mind an age in which human physical labor was replaced by contraptions; in our own era computers are poised to supplant human thought. Indeed, in modern versions of the John Henry-style man-vs.-machine matchup, the machines have won. In 1997, IBM computer Deep Blue defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov. Increased processing power and ever more sophisticated algorithms enabled IBM’s Watson to succeed at winning *Jeopardy!* in 2011. In 2016 AlphaGo, a computer that was part of Google’s DeepMind unit, vanquished Lee Sedol, reigning champion of the complex strategy game Go. Go has its origins in China and is played on a board that boasts more squares than a chessboard; software programs designed to play it require greater processing and storage capability than they do for the game of kings.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the computer’s defeat of Sedol occurred approximately ten years sooner than experts predicted that an automated player would be capable of beating a human opponent at Go.<sup>2</sup> The artificial intelligence train is gaining momentum.

### **The Ultimate Fate of Theological Librarians in the Robotic Era**

What about librarians? Will we be replaced by artificially intelligent computers that will eventually be able to out-play us in the archives, stacks, reference desks, technical service endeavors, and administrative offices? According to the website “Will Robots Take My Job?” (<https://willrobotstakemyjob.com>), which draws on tables created by Carl Benedikt Fry and Michael Osborne as part of the Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment, there is a 65% likelihood that robots will make professional librarians obsolete.<sup>3</sup> Although at first glance this is a very grim number, it is almost cheery when compared with the 95% odds that Fry and Osborne wager on the elimination of the positions of library clerical assistants. And library technicians who shelve, answer first-line reference questions, and assist patrons with finding basic information in databases are slated to become almost extinct. They face a 99% probability of being supplanted by robots. The website doesn’t specify a timeline for this library job nuclear winter, so one should set this information against predictions made in 2015 by machine learning specialists that computers will

---

<sup>1</sup> For information on DeepMind, AlphaGo, and the game of Go itself, see <https://deepmind.com/research/alphago/>.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous., “Experts Predict When AI Will Exceed Human Performance,” *Business Insider* June 11, 2017 <http://www.businessinsider.com/experts-predict-when-ai-will-exceed-human-performance-2017-6>. Accessed 7/29/17.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne, *The Future of Employment* (Oxford: The Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment, 2013). The tables, in which the individual positions are listed from the list to most probable of being replaced, appear on pp. 61-77.

---

Beth M. Sheppard is Director of the Divinity Library at Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC.



not be capable of writing a bestselling book until the middle of the century and that the complete replacement of all human jobs will not occur until approximately 2130.<sup>4</sup>

In the interim one could, if one is a theological librarian as opposed to a librarian of another stripe, assume that our particular branch of the profession is exempt from these dire estimates. After all, while the industrial era was about replacing brawn while the computer era is focused on superseding human intelligence, our field of specialization in religion and theology is concerned with a more elusive entity — the soul. There is a vast chasm between the execution of logical operations in thought processes which computers are now starting to engage, and the complexities of the ineffable relationship that humans have with the divine.<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, the “will robots take my job?” website calculates only a 0.81% chance that the jobs of clergy will be automated. The site subsequently rates the future of religious professionals as “totally safe.”<sup>6</sup>

Alternatively, we theological librarians might take the bull by the horns. Rather than being fatalistic about our future, or conversely complacent that robots or intelligent computers will never have relevance for theological professions, we could instead seek to determine to what extent, if any, computers enhanced by artificial intelligence might benefit our patrons. We could also speculate along with the clergy, faculty, and laity whom we serve in our libraries how to implement these advanced intelligent technologies in ministry settings, research, teaching, and devotional life.

To be sure, not every task undertaken in a house of worship, university religion department, or stand-alone seminary is theological in nature. There are more than a fair share of basic clerical, hospitality, and business functions that support the work of ministry professionals in any given congregation or context. Such areas might benefit from the application of advanced machines. And, we librarians are in prime position to start thinking about these issues. After all, our own MLIS and MLS degrees prepare us broadly for work in the information field. My ultimate objective is to set the stage for more in-depth conversations. It is time to think about what future opportunities there might be for theological libraries in light of new technological changes and start laying the tracks for them.

In this approach, our mindset is not to become defensive about technology, but to imagine audaciously what new devices and gadgets we might conscript for the benefit of those whom we serve. We are actually following in the footsteps of law librarians undertaking similar explorations in their own specialty, though without the theological musings that would and should characterize ours. For instance, Nancy B. Talley writes, “...[law] librarians must consider new ways to incorporate technology that may help to improve the quality of library service.”<sup>7</sup> Further, she asserts, “The uses for

<sup>4</sup> Katja Grace, John Salvatier, Allan Dafoe, Baobao Zhang, and Owain Evans, “When Will AI Exceed Human Performance? Evidence from AI Professionals.” Cornell University ARXIV Repository. Submitted by authors May 30, 2017 with DOI arXiv:1705.08807v2; <https://arxiv.org/abs/1705.08807> See chart on p. 3. Accessed 7/29/17.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Geraci has written an interesting article in which he surveys some of the writing of early robotics pioneers designed for popular reading. He concludes that the language they use and the pictures they paint of a final peaceable kingdom in which humans do not need bodies because their consciousness will be uploaded into machines (thus overcoming the limits imposed by death) has parallels with language of hope related to the end times and the new creation that is present in the apocalyptic literature of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In essence, there is a strand of thinking that appears in popular scientific literature about robots and artificial intelligence that would view belief in souls/spirits as a “feeble psychology ploy” given that, with time, science will essentially attain the same objectives without the need of the divine. Robert Geraci, “Apocalyptic AI: Religion and the Promise of Artificial Intelligence,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76 no. 1 (March 2008): 138-166. See especially p. 148.

In contrast to the computer scientists who are proponents of what Geraci calls “Apocalyptic AI,” Gary Locklair, while conceding that one potential goal of AI is to eventually transfer the contents of a person’s mind into a computer and thus achieve what appears to be eternal life (p. 368), maintains that humans are more than mere intelligence (p. 366). As a result, such a transfer would not enable a human to truly live on in the computer and the computer would still only be a highly intelligent tool and that “only God can create a human Soul” (p. 369). Gary Locklair, “Intelligent Computers in a Christian Worldview,” *Lutheran Mission Matters*, 24 no. 3 (2016).

<sup>6</sup> <https://willrobotstakemyjob.com/21-2011-clergy> Accessed 7/29/17.

<sup>7</sup> B. Talley, “Imagining the Use of Intelligent Agents and Artificial Intelligence in Academic Law Libraries,” *Law Library Journal*, 108 no. 3 (2016-19): 385.



artificial intelligence will likely expand to include services that we have yet to imagine. Academic law librarians should embrace these ideas and champion agent technology and artificial intelligence for the entire law school community.”<sup>8</sup>

Exploring what some artificial intelligence innovations might be capable of doing in a theological library setting, we at the Duke Divinity Library decided to devise our own Librarian vs. Robot duel. I invited our reference librarian to challenge Amazon’s smart home assistant, the Echo Show, to a theological reference throw-down. In preparation, other staff members devised questions to put to the pair while I scoured the list of relevant Alexa third-party skills to download into the device.<sup>9</sup> In short, the staff was assuming the role of mock library patrons while I prepped the unit in a way roughly parallel to how a collection development librarian fills a library’s shelves. Before moving to a blow-by-blow account of the questions asked and the results, however, it might be a good idea to define some terms associated with the field of artificial intelligence.

## Getting Up To Speed: The Vocabulary of Artificial Intelligence

The term *artificial intelligence* or its abbreviation, AI, has become ubiquitous in twenty-first century parlance and even occurs in popular journalism. (In fact, the news aggregator on my own iPad has added it as a section heading given my history of reading pieces on that topic.) So, what is AI? First off, it is important to begin with the caveat put forth by Noreen Herzfeld, Professor of Theology and Science at St. John’s University: it is hard to tell the difference between a computer program or machine that is artificially intelligent and one that is just running a normal piece of software.<sup>10</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Joanna Goodman, author of the book *Robots in Law*.<sup>11</sup> Goodman points out that there is a vast distinction between AI and the sophisticated search technologies that libraries generally employ in research databases and federated search engines. Despite the usefulness and apparent complexity of AI, it is also not necessarily present in the business software programs and automated workflow systems that are deployed in law offices to promote efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

### Weak and Strong AI

At times an additional distinction is made between weak AI and strong AI. The former involves a machine simply simulating intelligent behavior through careful programming. The latter, by contrast, involves a computer that can adapt to new situations or input.<sup>13</sup> In some instances, as Goodman observes, a computer with strong AI might “... guide, choose — or actually take — a particular course of action.”<sup>14</sup> Chatbots like Alexa, which are computer programs that interact with humans by communicating either by text or voice, actually come in both flavors — weak and strong — depending on their programming. There are many chatbots including Alexa, Siri, Mitsuku, and others.<sup>15</sup> Some are designed merely to deliver witty repartee or cocktail party conversation, while others function more like search engines. Any chatbot classified as using

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 401.

<sup>9</sup> While the device is capable of finding some very popular skills and initiating them in the course of filling a user’s request, most content is controlled by means of manually adding skills to the Alexa app. The owner downloads the app onto a phone or tablet. (It did not appear to be possible to download the skills to a regular laptop.) These Amazon skills and their content seem to remain on Amazon’s cloud and the Echo merely queries them when the device owner utters an appropriate keyword or command.

<sup>10</sup> Noreen Herzfeld, “A New Member of the Family? The Continuum of Being, Artificial Intelligence, and the Image of God,” *Theology and Science*, 5 no. 3 (2007): 240.

<sup>11</sup> Joanna Goodman, *Robots in Law: How Artificial Intelligence is Transforming Legal Services* (Peoria, IL: Ark Group, 2016), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Weak and strong AI are succinctly defined by Gary Locklair, who also provides a few examples. See pg. 361-2. Luke Dormehl, a journalist and tech writer, offers an alternate definition in which “weak AI” designates a robot or program that is only useful in a narrow field of single application, while strong AI is equivalent to artificial general intelligence (AGI) or to when a single machine can succeed at multiple, unrelated tasks. See *Thinking Machines: The Quest for Artificial Intelligence and Where It is Taking Us Next* (New York: TarcherPerigee, 2017), 213-14. This definition is similar to that offered by Michele L. McNeal and David Newyear. See “Introducing Chatbots in Libraries” *Library Technology Reports*, 49 no. 8 (November/December 2013): 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Goodman, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Rather than functioning to access information, Mitsuku is designed to entertain with lighthearted conversation (<http://mitsuku.com/>). See also this directory of chatbots at Chatbots.org: <https://www.chatbots.org>.

weak AI has been programmed to offer only stock responses to commonly occurring conversational sorties or requests for information.

One example of a library chatbot with weak AI programming was Emma, a text-based help services program that was in use a few years ago in the Mentor Public Library, Ohio.<sup>16</sup> To program Emma to execute her duties in assisting patrons with basic questions, Emma was supplied with an intensive pattern-matching protocol. In pattern matching, as Lauren Kunze describes it, a programmer's first step is to make a guess concerning what a human might say and code a response. At the next juncture, after the machine has executed an actual exchange with a human, the programmer evaluates a transcript to determine what was actually said. The programmer then decides whether the bot's response was accurate and initiates a sequence of "update, rinse, repeat" until the bot is responding both correctly and fluidly.<sup>17</sup> In short, no matter how sophisticated a pattern-matching chatbot might be, it will never offer a rejoinder other than one with which it is preprogrammed, nor will it be able to properly understand a question or comment from a patron that is phrased too differently from what was anticipated in advance by its software. It says nothing independent of its encoding.

At the present time, a company called Pandorabots offers a free developer sandbox that allows prospective clients, including libraries, the opportunity to create and test a chatbot that employs weak AI (<https://playground.pandorabots.com/en/>). In the process of designing one of these Pandorobot chat personalities, one makes use of a programming language called AIML (Artificial Intelligence Markup Language).<sup>18</sup> Supposedly, building a chatbot on the site and quickly grasping AIML is within the reach of a novice, though I myself have not yet tried it. The company does, however, seem to have librarians in mind as an intended audience. At one point the Pandorabots website even boasts, "Pandorabots believes virtual assistant librarians will lower library costs and increase library usage."<sup>19</sup> So far, library chatbots have not become ubiquitous in libraries. In fact, the directory of chatbots at [chatbots.org](http://chatbots.org) only lists fifteen for the topic "library," and of those several, like Emma, are no longer functioning.

I had the opportunity to engage in a phone conversation with Henry Kunze, a sales representative at Pandorabots. When I asked him about the difference between the bots on his platform and the Amazon Echo — which is also a chatbot, albeit one that users access through Amazon's speaker devices as opposed to a keyboard — he mentioned that the two are competitors. Pandorabots and Amazon take advantage of different programming methods, and Kunze characterized the differences as similar to the old VHS vs. Betamax format rivalries that plagued the videotape field in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>20</sup>

As it turns out, the Amazon Echo's voice interface does not use AIML at all, but relies on strong AI and a deep learning structure within the program known as neural nets. In essence, rather than viewing the finished code as a seamless whole, the program is constructed as many smaller pieces (nodes or neurons) of code that send signals back and forth to each other. Each of these tiny segments of code may be modified individually or given different weights as the machine categorizes new information. The constant communication between neural nodes enables the machine to actively parse out the underlying meaning or intent of voice or text input.

<sup>16</sup> The chatbot no longer appears on the Mentor Library site. It was originally created by employee David Newyear who has since transitioned to serve as manager of the Geauga County Library's Chardon Branch. Emma, as the system was called (also named InfoTabby at one point), was loosely associated with the Cybersphinx program at Pandorabots. Talley references it in her article (p. 388).

<sup>17</sup> Lauren Kunze, "On Chatbots," *TechCrunch* (Crunch Network, 2/16/16), <https://techcrunch.com/2016/02/16/on-chatbots/> (accessed 8/7/2017).

<sup>18</sup> For more on AIML tags see <http://www.alicebot.org/aiml.html>. On the older Cybersphinx project see: <https://pandorabots.com/static/html/PremiumServices/SoftwareSolutions/LibraryPandorobot/LandingPage.html>. Pandorabots generates revenue through hosting fees since all chatbots created on its platform must be hosted on its servers.

<sup>19</sup> <https://pandorabots.com/static/html/PremiumServices/SoftwareSolutions/LibraryPandorobot/LandingPage.html>. (Accessed 8/7/2017).

<sup>20</sup> Henry Kunze (Pandorabots). Phone Conversation 7/17/2017. On the identification of the Amazon Echo as a chatbot see Matthew Hutson, "When will Alexa, Google Assistant and Other 'Chatbots' Finally Talk to Us Like Real People?" *Science* (June 20, 2017), <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/when-will-alexa-google-assistant-and-other-chatbots-finally-talk-us-real-people> (Accessed July 21, 1017).

In other words, rather than a programmer presciently entering every single possible combination of words, their synonyms, and other syntax that might be used in a conversational gambit into the software, the strong AI device makes use of neural nets and is calibrated with a few samples that are uploaded by the programmer. A computer prepared this way will eventually begin to independently assign varying weights to its many nodes to help it extrapolate to a wide number of variations on its own.<sup>21</sup>

## The Turing Test

It is possible to champion weak over strong AI or vice-versa. In my conversation with Henry Kunze, he pointed out that in 2016 Microsoft had to shut down a chatbot named Tay that had a strong AI program. This occurred when Tay, who had the persona of a teenaged girl, began to learn swearwords, Nazi ideology, and a host of other inappropriate material within 24 hours of exposure to the general public. Clearly people took delight in punking Tay, and as a result it acquired all manner of inappropriate habits.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, depending on the specific parameters or limits in a device's application, not every strong AI-enabled device is corruptible.<sup>23</sup> Rather than advocating one method of programming over the other, it seems best at this point to assert that both strong and weak AI have their places in the world of intelligent devices. When one asks pragmatically whether machines are meeting the objectives for which they were created or functioning in ways that are perceived by lay users as intelligent, the superiority of either strong or weak AI seems to dissipate.

This proposal — that efficacy would be the yardstick by which the intelligence of computers might be assessed — was advanced by computer theoretician and futurist Alan Turing (who coincidentally was writing about the smart computers of the future in the same decade that Harry Belafonte was crooning about a manual-labor-replacing-machine from the past.) In what became known as the Turing Test, Turing hypothesized that a computer might be labeled intelligent if, during a five-minute-long conversation with humans (executed either by voice or typed input), the machine could fool the humans into thinking that they were conversing with a real person.<sup>24</sup> It would seem that this test could be passed by either strong or weak AI programming.

Some further elements that distinguish AI-enhanced devices like the Echo Show from those running ordinary software programs like the one I am using to type this article may be highlighted. They include 1) the ability to understand human speech, a feat known as natural language processing; 2) the capacity to use stored data and information to answer inquiries and draw new conclusions, sometimes called automated reasoning; and 3) the facility to learn and adapt to new situations by extrapolating from patterns, which is called machine learning.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See the following for a description of Alexa's ability that is now available to developers for use in their own applications: [https://aws.amazon.com/lex/details/?sc\\_channel=PS&sc\\_campaign=lex\\_2017&sc\\_publisher=google&sc\\_medium=awns\\_lex\\_b&sc\\_content=sitelink&sc\\_detail=amazon%20lex&sc\\_category=lex&sc\\_segment=details&sc\\_matchtype=e&sc\\_country=US&sc\\_kwcid=AL!4422!3!209039217740!e!!g!!amazon%20lex&ef\\_id=WYYftgAAAXGhnE6Z:20170806172420:s](https://aws.amazon.com/lex/details/?sc_channel=PS&sc_campaign=lex_2017&sc_publisher=google&sc_medium=awns_lex_b&sc_content=sitelink&sc_detail=amazon%20lex&sc_category=lex&sc_segment=details&sc_matchtype=e&sc_country=US&sc_kwcid=AL!4422!3!209039217740!e!!g!!amazon%20lex&ef_id=WYYftgAAAXGhnE6Z:20170806172420:s) (accessed 8/7/2017).

<sup>22</sup> For a description of Tay's corruption by the public and subsequent removal by Microsoft see Helena Horton, "Microsoft Deletes 'Teen Girl' AI after It became a Hitler Loving Sex Robot within 24 Hours," *The Telegraph*, March 24, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/03/24/microsofts-teen-girl-ai-turns-into-a-hitler-loving-sex-robot-wit/> (accessed 8/7/1017).

<sup>23</sup> A Chinese version of the bot was programmed to detect and deflect racial slurs and didn't suffer the same fate. See C. Custer, "I Tried to Make Microsoft's Chinese Chatbot Racist. Here's How She Stacked Up to Tay," *Tech in Asia* (August 3, 2016). <https://www.techinasia.com/tay-bad-microsofts-chinese-chatbot-racist> (accessed 8/7/17).

<sup>24</sup> An alternate measure, known as the Lovelace Test, is named after Ada Lovelace, a nineteenth-century mathematician who pondered how computers, if they ever should exist, might work. As summed up by David Ferrucci, Paul Bello, and Selmer Bringsjord, Lovelace "believed that only when computers originate things should they be believed to have minds." Thus, a modern standard to assess the creativity of computers is named in her honor. "Creativity, the Turing Test and the (Better) Lovelace Test," *Minds and Machines*. 1 no. 11 (2001): 4.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 2. Of course, when these three elements are placed in robots rather than static PCs or servers, or even the Amazon Echo Show, additional features may include computer vision — whereby the device perceives and perhaps interacts with objects — or even the power to move about. It is important to note, however, that not every robot is artificially intelligent. Some are simply machines that are programmed to move in a repetitive fashion without the ability to adapt to new situations or execute new combinations of gestures on their own. Those sorts of features require machine learning.

## Machine Learning

When it comes to *machine learning*, the goal very succinctly is “...to enable machines to learn without programming them explicitly.”<sup>26</sup> There are a variety of methods that may be employed to accomplish this, some of which appear to draw on principles present in first-order logic. One way, amongst others, that a computer might be trained to pick up new knowledge on its own is called *supervised learning*. It so happens that one variant of supervised learning is analogous to the bibliographic instruction sessions librarians undertake in order to assist human patrons. The steps used in a bibliographic instruction encounter are spelled out below and compared with their computer science equivalents:

Bibliographic Instruction Activity in Which the Librarian:	Computer Science Equivalent in Which the Developer:
accesses given database in advance, if possible, and prepares some sample searches	creates a training set
demonstrates the sample searches identified in step 1 to the patron	loads the training set into the computer’s knowledge base
encourages the patron to try searching on his/her own	allows the computer to perform the operation with a testing set
observes the patron’s first search or two to confirm that the researcher has grasped the concepts	validates that the algorithm enables the robot to complete the requested action correctly
<b>Outcome:</b> the patron has gained new skills in information literacy and should be good when employing them in any future research project.	<b>Outcome:</b> the computer should be making inferences about information that was not part of the original testing set or training set and requiring little additional assistance to continue executing its task with new samples.

Table 1

Another illustration of how this works might be helpful. Imagine that there is a basket filled with one hundred hymnals and pew Bibles that we would like a computer to sort into piles. But first, the computer must learn how to do the job. Enter the human trainer, who might separate out a random seventy-five books to use as the training data set. He or she would painstakingly label each volume in the set of seventy-five as either “hymnal” or “Bible.” Meanwhile, a programmer would write an algorithm, or sequence of instructions, to feed to the machine that would enable the computer to understand what job it was to do (sort the books) and what criteria it should use to go about the process. As an illustration, the program might specify that the device should look for a particular word on the cover of the book or even determine if musical notation is present on a random page in the middle of the volume. After the labelling of items in the training set is completed by the human assistant, the labeled items from the training set, along with the algorithm, would be loaded into the computer’s memory. Then the machine would be asked to make inferences from the training data to the remaining unlabeled twenty-five books in the basket of mixed Bibles and hymnals (the testing set). The final step would be to assess whether the resulting output of the computer on this smaller set of items was accurate (validation).<sup>27</sup> If so, the algorithm was correct.<sup>28</sup> If not, modifications would have to be made to let the computer know what was mislabeled and why, or the algorithm tweaked.

In short order with modifications, the robot should be sorting most hymnals from Bibles on its own. Furthermore, a sophisticated algorithm might allow the “learning computer” to hold out exceptions or outliers that it is unable to easily identify (such as a book with a torn cover); these, when subsequently labeled by humans, would permit the machine to produce ever more accurate results as it encountered additional anomalies. Eventually, based on the wealth of its accumulated

<sup>26</sup> Mohssen Mohammed, *Muhammad Badruddin Khan, Eihab Bashier Mohammed Bashier. Machine Learning: Algorithms and Applications* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2017), xxi.

<sup>27</sup> Additional points for evaluating the program might include whether or not the particular algorithm allowed the program to run quickly with a minimum of memory, or if it might need to be tightened up to increase efficiency.

<sup>28</sup> There often is not a single algorithm to achieve the same end. For example, two different humans may use two different methods to sort the Bibles and hymnals in our example. One might sort them based on the color of their covers, while another might sort them first by their size and then double check them by their titles. Given a basket of books pulled from the pews of a single congregation, both methods would get the job done.

experience, the machine likely would be able to be able to classify more distant outliers on its own without human intervention. In other words, when machine learning is implemented within a software program, "...instead of pretending computers are human and simply feeding them with knowledge, we help computers to reason and then let them generalize what they've learned to new information."<sup>29</sup>

### Do not be afraid...

I do, of course, have an ulterior motive in presenting this hymnal/Bible categorization example. If one notices, it contained neither mathematical formulas nor funny symbols like:

$$\forall \chi \chi \in \text{Hymnals} \Rightarrow \text{Notes}$$

(which, if I've rendered it correctly given the lamentable fact that programming logic is a lacuna in my own education, is hopefully the way to assert that hymnals have musical notation). It goes to show that any individual theological librarian need not master a computer language, be a whiz at probability and statistics, know first order symbolic logic, or understand the intricacy of planes and vectors in order to enter conversations about artificial intelligence and its future in theological libraries. The sole requirement to board the AI train and have a profitable dialogue is the ability to understand a little bit about what AI is and how it functions. That is all it takes to set our imaginations free to dream up possible applications and uses for AI that might benefit theological libraries or the wider field of religion in general.

## Theological Librarian vs. Machine: The Competition and Results

This brings us back to our competition between Josh Leto, Duke Divinity School Reference Librarian extraordinaire, and Alexa, the chatbot, a conversational interface within Amazon's Echo Show. Naturally, one goal of putting the Show through its paces was to assess whether or not Alexa was ready for the big time — meaning deployment at circulation and reference desks.<sup>30</sup>

### Preparing for the Competition

Since the idea of testing the Echo in a theological library context occurred when the Alexa Show was a fairly new product in the Amazon Echo lineup, our first tasks involved unpacking it, hooking it up, and determining what it might have in terms of theological content and pre-programming right out of the box. I had allotted two days for this stage of preparation.

It turns out that setting up the device and connecting it to the network was easy. It involved downloading the Alexa app onto my phone and also typing in my WiFi network encryption key. During this stage, a small keyboard and menu popped up on the Echo Show's touch screen. The only snag occurred with my initial intention to download the app to my laptop, which I use much more frequently than my phone or iPad. Sadly, the app is only available for mobile devices, which would be problematic in library settings. When used at a circulation or reference service point, it would make more sense for several authorized employees to access an app from a circulation station rather than using their personal phones or tablets.

The next step was to familiarize myself with the command structure related to the Alexa program. I chose to bring my Amazon gadget to attention with the word "Alexa" instead of the alternate *Star Trek*-inspired "Computer," which was offered in the app. Yet I have to confess that I find it awkward to say sentences that begin with a name. By contrast, my natural inclination is to put the vocative at the end (as in, "Please tell me today's weather forecast, Alexa.") Unfortunately, polite phrasing like this nets silence rather than the requested information, since the device is cued to begin listening upon hearing the command word.

---

<sup>29</sup>John Mannes, "WTF is Machine Learning?" *TechCrunch*, October 23, 2016, <https://techcrunch.com/2016/10/23/wtf-is-machine-learning/> Accessed 7/29/2016.

<sup>30</sup>The technology behind the Alexa interface makes use of deep learning (based on artificial neural networks), another subcategory of machine learning than the one described in the Bible/hymnal structured classification technique mentioned above. See <https://aws.amazon.com/lex/> for more information.





Figure 1: Echo Unboxing

To get ready for the clash of the reference titans, I discovered a few third-party skills in the Amazon library that seemed relevant for the field of religion. (Although, it was tempting to download the skill that might be used to tune a guitar or the game that enables one to play rock/paper/scissors — I’m not joking; that really exists). To be honest, most of the available religion skills that have been developed to this point are devotional in nature, such as those that feature an inspirational quote of the day. One example is the skill that reads Pope Francis’s most recent tweets. There are more than a handful that focus on Bible trivia or facts. Only a precious few skills are informational or are capable of plumbing datasets for content. To complicate things, since skills developed by third-party programmers are not native to Alexa, accessing many of these skills on Alexa also require knowledge of specific names and commands. In order to hear the pope’s

most recent musing, one could say, “Alexa, play today’s pope tweet” or “open today’s pope tweet.” But uttering other phrases, like, “Alexa, what did Pope Francis say today?” results in a very confused Alexa and echoing silence.

### Standard for Making a Determination

While getting oriented to the machine, I also firmed up what I jokingly call the “Sheppard Test,” or the criteria that a chatbot would have to meet in order to qualify for deployment in a theological library setting. In short, the apparatus must be capable of answering five random reference questions, preferably with a mix of simple directional questions and more complex queries. Furthermore, it must answer quickly, correctly, and in a way that satisfies the patron. While formulating this test I even went so far as to develop an elaborate rubric to assist in scoring. It included considerations such as the device’s ability to determine whether the patron is looking for material with a particular theological or denominational slant, and its ability to comprehend odd pronunciations that patrons might throw at it when referencing terms from classical Biblical languages.<sup>31</sup>

On the afternoon of the big event, I remained in my home where the device was located while the staff joined me through Skype via my laptop. Alexa is able to hear and respond to queries from offsite questioners by this means; this is good to know and may have future application in some way as we think about serving distance students in libraries. What follows are the questions and results of our Reference Librarian vs. Alexa clash.

### Transcript of the Questions and Answers

**Patron Question #1** (Anne Marie Boyd, Circulation Assistant): “Alexa, show me a peer reviewed article on Isaiah 41:10-20.”

- **Alexa:** Hum. I don’t know that one.
- **Mr. Leto:** Would one of these work? (He had executed a search on the ATLA database, limiting it to peer reviewed full text).

**Winner:** Mr. Leto, Reference Librarian.

**Patron Question #2** (Katie Benjamin, Archive Fellow): “Alexa, when did the Reformation begin?” (The question was reformulated into the command: “Alexa, Wikipedia “What year did the Reformation start?””)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> A copy of the rubric is available online here: [http://library.divinity.duke.edu/AI\\_Rubric.xlsx](http://library.divinity.duke.edu/AI_Rubric.xlsx).

<sup>32</sup> To the initial question, phrased as it was, Alexa simply responded, “Hum, I don’t know that.” During the course of practicing with the device, however, I had learned that Alexa is able to draw on Wikipedia — hence my intervention to rephrase the question.



- **Alexa:** (responding almost instantaneously): “The Reformation, also referred to as the Protestant Reformation...” — *Alexa continued reading the Wikipedia article aloud for a few moments and then paused, asking, “Tell me if you would like me to read more.”* After receiving an affirmative, *Alexa continued with the article, but after about 3 minutes it never got to a point where a date was mentioned. Eventually we requested Alexa to return to the home screen and cease reading the article.*
- **Mr. Leto:** (Responding after just seven or so seconds after consulting a library reference): “1517 was the date that Martin Luther published his 95 theses on the door of the cathedral.”

**Winner:** Mr. Leto, the human Theological Librarian. The staff did, however, appreciate the fact that on the Echo the text of the Wikipedia article appeared on the screen line by line as it was read, which opens interesting possibilities for applications geared toward those who have certain types of disabilities.

---

**Patron Question #3** (Katie Benjamin): “Alexa, what are the Synoptic Gospels?”

- **Alexa** (Instantaneously): “Synoptic Gospels are Matthew’s Gospel, Mark’s Gospel and Gospel of Luke.” (Note: This is a direct quote. No definite articles were used).
- **Mr. Leto** (Instantaneously): “Matthew, Mark and Luke.”

**Winner:** Tie. Both Alexa and our Theological Librarian nailed this one in an equal amount of time.

---

**Patron Question #4** (Rebecca Bowers, Archivist): “What are the hours of the Duke Divinity School Library?”

- **Alexa:** Sorry, I don’t have the business hours for Duke University Libraries–Perkins. (Alexa, while answering, displayed a Yelp entry for the central Duke library, which goes by the name “Duke University Libraries,” but had no information about the Duke Divinity School Library, which is a separate professional school library on the Duke campus with its own hours. The Divinity School Library hours are indicated on its dedicated website at <http://library.divinity.duke.edu>. Incidentally, the central library’s Yelp account did not include its library hours and at the time, the Divinity Library did not have a Yelp page.)
- **Mr. Leto:** “This week, since it is summer break and there are no classes, our hours are weekdays from 8-5.”

**Winner:** Mr. Leto, Theological Librarian.

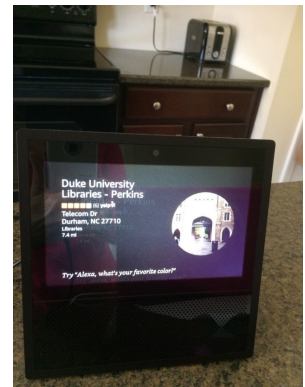


Figure 2: Yelp

---

**Patron Question #5** (Katie Benjamin): “Alexa, what are the lectionary readings for this coming Sunday?” (The question was recast as the two-part query “Alexa, open the Catholic Daily, please” and then “What is the lectionary for Sunday?” so that the third-party skill would open.)

- **Alexa:** “The Readings for Sunday, July ...” (The app successfully identified the particular feast day, and began reading the first reading for the Sunday in question. Unlike the Wikipedia skill, this one did not, however, display the text while it was reading — presumably it was designed for the older Amazon Echo tower, which did not have a screen.)
- **Mr. Leto:** “Katie, is there a particular denomination you have in mind, or would you prefer the Common Lectionary?”

**Winner:** Mr. Leto, Theological Librarian. This win was awarded given Mr. Leto’s ability to correctly discern that the answer required further customization for this patron, who is not Catholic. An explanatory note is needed here. I had downloaded the “Catholic Daily” skill to prepare for the contest (it was the only lectionary on offer for use with Alexa as

of the date of the competition), and while it is an impressive skill and quick to access once one knows the proper series of commands, this skill did not quite meet the needs of this particular patron. The creators of the skill are to be lauded for making a well-done skill and for being first to the punch in being early adopters of a new technology.

## Back to the Locker Room— Interpreting the Results of the Contest

### Content

In sum, the Duke Divinity School Reference Librarian soundly defeated Alexa when it came to answering theological inquiries. Clearly Alexa is not yet able to pass the Sheppard Test. So, for the next few years, our jobs as theological librarians are safe. That being said, there are some interesting observations to make.

First, Alexa's ability to answer correctly, or, for that matter, respond at all depends on what content is available to the gadget. And at this point, there isn't much. Wikipedia is pre-loaded and so are a weather database, the IMDB (Internet Movie Database), and Yelp for business information (and library hours — don't forget to stake a claim in Yelp for your own library!), but the machine's accessible knowledge bank is clearly a work in progress. For one thing, Alexa is not able to search the Internet at large. Correspondence with Alexa customer service did indicate that talks with Google were underway, but as of now, one should believe Amazon's own disclaimer that "Alexa may not have answers to everything."<sup>33</sup>

Equally important, at present it is simply not possible to back-fill Alexa's content gaps by relying on the offerings of third-party downloadable skills from the Skills section of the Amazon site. In fact, when it comes to the subject "Religion" there is a paucity of them available. As for those that do exist, some, while possibly amusing (let us not overlook the Kwan Yin Fortunetelling skill), would not necessarily be suitable for an academic theological library context.

There are, however, a few gems. For instance, following the formal portion of our contest, I asked Alexa to open and recite the "Wesleyan Covenant Prayer" in order to demonstrate that skill for our group. Duke Divinity School is one of the official seminaries of the United Methodist Church, and therefore skills related to our denomination were of particular interest to the staff. Sadly, of the 182 skills that were returned in the search for "religion" in the Amazon skills store in mid-July when this project was undertaken, the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer program was the only one that reflected our tradition. It was created by Unique Coding Solutions LLC. Curious that the skill did not appear to have been published by one of the United Methodist Church communications offices, I tracked down the CEO of the company, Renier Oliva. He graciously agreed to visit with me.<sup>34</sup> The conversation with him was enlightening and explained much about the likely origins and character of the skills available on the Amazon site to date.

Oliva quickly mentioned that he is not a theologian, but rather a computer programmer by trade, although he happens to be a member of a United Methodist Church. "I love the church," he said, "I met my wife through the church and I wanted to give something back." At the same time, his initial impetus to create a skill for Amazon Echo was shepherded along by the fact that Amazon opened its code to developers and was encouraging the creation of skills by providing modest prize incentives, such as free Echo devices. And, in order to inspire programmers less skilled than Oliva to get their feet wet with programming, Amazon was apparently also offering templates that novices might tap in order to create simple fact-based skills, game skills, and a few others. It seems that in many circumstances the available templates dictated the type and format of some subject matter.

In Oliva's case, rather than a template, there was an instance of serendipity that governed his choice of material and approach to the project. Just at the moment when Oliva was casting about for content to use, his pastor launched a church-wide study of the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer for the congregation. Thus, the skill was born. Originally, Oliva hoped to translate the prayer into Spanish and offer it in that language, but at the time, Amazon was only supporting the development of skills in American English, UK English, and German.

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/ref=hp\\_left\\_v4\\_sib?ie=UTF8&nodeId=201549800](https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/ref=hp_left_v4_sib?ie=UTF8&nodeId=201549800) (accessed 8/10/2017). The correspondence regarding talks that are underway with Google was received from the address alexa-support@amazon.com on 7/29/17 and signed "Mariyamma P."

<sup>34</sup> Renier Oliva, Phone Conversation, 7/14/2017.

I pressed the question of copyright clearance and whether he ever contemplated writing the content for skills. Oliva, chuckling a bit, mentioned that he knew that the traditional (as opposed to the modern) version of the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer was in public domain and as a result was available. As a programmer and not a content creator, he was not particularly interested in taking the time to track down permission to employ the more up-to-date version. He emphasized that like most programmers, he simply wants to program and make available content that is both provided and copyright-cleared by others.

I couldn't help but wonder whether most of the available content in the Alexa Skills store was simply the result of programmers experimenting with Amazon's platform and creating services that reflected their personal interests using public domain content. If so, this prompts one to speculate about what would happen if librarians and ministry professionals worked together with programmers to create, curate, and license religion content. Obviously, the field is wide open for us to make our mark.

### **Performance**

A second area that occasioned some further reflection after the Librarian vs. Machine contest involved Alexa's performance as a gadget. It was already mentioned that staff was pleased to see the text of the Wikipedia article appear on the screen simultaneously with Alexa's reading the information. Again, this has tremendous potential for addressing issues of accessibility by those with disabilities. Taken a step further, the combination of speech with viewable text might also have applications for foreign language acquisition, and we would welcome the development of such educational skills.

One other thing that stuck out in terms of device performance was the fact that without any advanced "voice training," Alexa was able to understand flawlessly five separate individuals during the contest. This sort of ability would be important if the device were set up in a business since it would have to handle input from many different patrons. Alexa's success in this arena should not be overlooked.

For comparison, I want to mention that in my own experience Siri, the Apple voice assistant, is rarely able to figure out what I'm saying. A few days ago I opened my laptop and requested that Siri locate "houses of worship near me." Much to my consternation she inexplicably returned a map that pin-pointed Jabeau Park Appaloosas and Quarter Horses--just outside of Melbourne, Australia. Seriously. Perhaps the computer heard me say "horses" instead of houses? But even so, Australia isn't in the ballpark of North Carolina on any printed map I've ever consulted. To be fair, Siri always understands my husband perfectly. Nevertheless, the contrast between this example with Siri and my many successful encounters with Alexa in the short time I've owned it to date are stark.

At the same time that Alexa's voice recognition capabilities sparkle, its ability to easily retrieve information at times leaves something to be desired and, in fact, is a stumbling block to the idea of adapting Alexa for use with aiding library patrons. In a nutshell, the problem is that every third-party app has its own set of commands and protocols that are required to operate it. This structure is clunky. It puts the burden on the patron to recall not only what skills are available on a device, but also each one's particular "open sesame" and command structure. Frankly, until there is seamless integration of these programs with the Echo and each other, it will not be possible to deploy the device in libraries.

Another hang-up to the device's suitability in the short term in library front-line reference contexts became manifest when we asked the question concerning the date of the Protestant Reformation. Since there was no other source for Alexa that might contain this content, I helped to reframe the inquiry in order to direct Alexa to search Wikipedia and give it a fighting chance. Even so, it turns out that the Echo version of the Wikipedia article on the Protestant Reformation was quite different from the entry available through a simple Safari search.<sup>35</sup> While the later frontloads the date that Luther affixed his theses to the cathedral door, the Wikipedia entry that was discovered by Alexa did not. The device began reading paragraph upon paragraph of text and, frankly, our attention flagged. After all, the patron

---

<sup>35</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformation> (accessed 8/10/17). It is possible that there is a lag between when a Wikipedia article is updated, and when Alexa reflects the change. We noticed a delay of at least a week between when our Duke Divinity Library Yelp page was visible via Google after its creation and when Alexa was finally able to discover it.

was seeking only one simple fact, not an entire disquisition. It would be helpful to have semantics applied to the Echo content so that it would return the equivalent of rich snippets that would highlight and read the specific fact that answers the patron's inquiry.<sup>36</sup>

### **Other Features**

Although its other features were not specifically tested in our Librarian vs. Machine competition, the Echo Show is much more than a mere information hub. In fact, it may be possible that some of its other features would be helpful in a theological library context. For instance, it is easy to imagine that its ability to create lists could be used to keep a running tally of items from the supply closet that should be reordered. Alternately, the listing feature might serve as a place to stash the library's close-of-day step-by-step protocol. Alexa's "smart home" integration aspect might help libraries housed in older facilities where electrical wiring may be problematic: the ability to install voice-control lighting to brighten a storeroom or other space prior to entering it would be beneficial. In addition, there may be ways to adapt Alexa's timer and alarm features for various library activities. It might be the case that as the Amazon Echo matures, enterprising librarians may find ways to make use of virtually everything — perhaps even that "rock/paper/scissors" game.

### **Evaluation of Alexa's Echo Show Overall**

First, it is clear that Alexa is designed for home use rather than library settings. To be honest, I find that I am using my personal unit for cooking, running household lights, and other small tasks more often than I ever thought that I would. Once one learns the necessary commands, it is incredibly helpful and convenient. In addition, for those who are visual learners, the ability to see items on the Echo Show's screen is a boon. Incidentally, the size of the screen, not to mention the footprint of the unit itself, are perfectly adequate for home use applications. (In fact, if the device were any larger, it would likely intrude too much on precious work and counter spaces.)

In terms of religion content and eventual application in library settings, a charitable assessment is that this technology and delivery mode for religious content is in its infancy. One can, however, imagine that there is great potential. No doubt the deployment of this or some other equivalent device in theological libraries further down the line is likely inevitable.

### **Final Thoughts: The Future of Theological Librarians**

So, is the future for theological librarians bleak? No. Merely different. In the short run, of course, as our exchange clearly demonstrated, the technology cannot pass a basic test of correctly answering five theological reference questions in a row. So our jobs are safe. For now. We are in a period analogous to the early days of the industrial era, in which John Henry was able to outpace the steam drill before it really got rolling. One imagines, however, that in the long run, say within fifteen years, robots will be fit for implementation in libraries. Long before that time comes, however, many theological librarians may not necessarily be working for "libraries" at all. By contrast, they may be fulfilling their information sciences ministry calling within a wide range of contexts.

### **Future Non-Library Opportunities for Theological Librarians**

Perhaps some might find themselves working in their particular faith tradition's national offices, or employed by large megachurches, or plausibly hired by consortia comprised of smaller congregations.<sup>37</sup> In these settings the theological information professional will focus on collecting denominationally specific content for apps and skills and will work side by side with programmers. On the one hand, these partnerships will free computer scientists from the burden of coming up with specialty material beyond the purview of their formal training. The resulting apps/skills will fill the religion information lacunae that exit with assistant devices like Alexa today.

<sup>36</sup> On the Semantic Web and rich snippets see, R. De Virgilio, F. Frasinca, W. Hop, and S. Lachner, "A Reverse Engineering Approach for Automatic Annotation of Web Pages," *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, 64 no. 1 (2013): 119-140.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, there is a skill entitled, "The Episcopal Church," which supposedly will work with a user's ZIP code to push information from the nearest local church to the user's Echo.

While some of us are helping to create programs and software, still other theological librarians may labor for a tech company. These theological information professionals might also add a human expert's touch to a given tech behemoth's offerings by creating specially curated and reviewed lists of religion content sources that might be recommended to customers. Such positions are no great stretch. After all, Apple Music presently employs DJs and other music subject professionals to suggest songs to listeners.<sup>38</sup>

Some of us may make a living serving as independent contractors or, as they would call it in the industry, Mechanical Turks (MTurk) who work from home adding labels to machine learning training sets, categorizing religious information, or transcribing religious audio and multimedia. They might even participate in crowdsourced projects to verify data. Opportunities for this already exist.<sup>39</sup> Such human intelligence activities will enable robots and even human researchers to better access and interpret big data sets in our field (see table 2 for some sample labeling topics).<sup>40</sup>

In essence, there is a lifetime's worth of potential projects to be done.

### The Roles Librarians Will Find in Traditional Theological Libraries

Finally, in two decades some theological librarians may still work within the context of the academic theological libraries that make up the majority of institutional members in ATLA. However, the particular duties and roles held by the staff will be quite different than those of today. For example, every future theological library will either need its own in-house Optimizer Librarian or need to have access to a sub-contracted optimizer service. Clearly, as demonstrated our exchange with the Amazon Echo about a simple thing like when a library is open, it won't be enough merely to have informational websites about our hours or services if we and our content are invisible to users of the devices.

One might also predict that student workers will no longer answer basic reference questions when chatbots have passed the Sheppard Test. But this does not mean that students will no longer contribute to the work of libraries. Instead they will be redeployed to accomplish duties that might include transcription of multi-media content, data labeling, and database clean-up. This latter, for instance, might involve finally rectifying all of the uncorrected OCR that firms like Internet Archive and others produce when scanning library books. Although uncorrected OCR may not, in most instances, provide too much of a roadblock to data mining, it is going to serve as a distraction when these typos in the OCR text files are ultimately discovered and subsequently served up to patrons by voice-enabled information and task assistants like Alexa.

Librarians of the future will also spend quite a bit of time focused on copyright clearance and licensing for the digital content that will form the backbone of AI-enabled devices. Further, so that the records of the deals we've cut don't end up as accessible as a snarl of coat hangers, we will need to have staff in place to manage clearance tasks and records.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ben Lovejoy, "Behind the Scenes of Human Curation at Apple Music, as Company Ups the Ante on Licensing" *9 to 5 MAC* (July 18, 2016), <https://9to5mac.com/2016/07/18/apple-music-human-curation-licensing-fees/> (accessed 8/8/2017). Dormehl concedes that algorithms could provide perfectly acceptable playlists, but humans might add something extra. See pp. 146-147.

<sup>39</sup> These freelancers are hired by a company called Crowdsourcing, though it is impossible to ascertain from their site whether any of their projects cover the subject matter of religion. <https://www.crowdsourcing.com/workforce/> (accessed 8/8/2017).

<sup>40</sup> For a sample of the types of job available presently see: <https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>. Incidentally, religion subject specialists do indeed have big data sets. A partial list includes things like our own institutional repositories and collections of digitized materials, government-generated census data on religion, Pew's religion and society datasets, the GDELT public domain book collection from Hathi Trust and Internet Archive, Project Gutenberg, the ATLA full-text serials database, and even the copious membership lists/financial records/annual reports currently squirreled away in church and denominational administrative offices. Less well known, perhaps, are the datasets available through Kaggle, a machine learning training site for data specialists and developers. It presently features fourteen open datasets in religion. Plus, it is theoretically possible to extract anonymized and aggregated data on religion topics from social media posts in Facebook, Twitter, and many more sites or services besides if those opportunities become available. The Pew datasets are available for download here: <http://www.pewforum.org/datasets/> (accessed 7/9/2012). The GDELT book big dataset of over three million pre-1923 public domain titles is hosted here: <https://cloud.google.com/bigquery/public-data/>. For the Kaggle sets see <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets?sortBy=relevance&group=featured&search=religion> (accessed 8/7/2017).



SAMPLE DATA LABELS FOR A HYPOTHETICAL RELIGION DATASET			
Unlabeled Data Element	Decision Point for Label	Possible Label	Agent applying Label
Publishing House/Publisher	Associated /Affiliated with the Roman Catholic denomination	Yes/No	Human/Machine
Newspaper Article	Theological Leaning or bias	Conservative/Liberal	Human/Machine
Biblical Studies Commentary in EBook Format	Contents written post discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (regardless of publication/republication date)	Yes/No	Human/Machine
Journal Article	Peer Reviewed	Yes/No	Human/Machine
Cookbook	Reflects Kosher Laws	Yes/No	Human/Machine
Blog	Authored by an academic trained in Biblical Studies	Yes/No	Human/Machine
Photograph	Contains Star/Crescent symbol of Islam	Present/Absent	Human/Machine

Table 2

Bibliographic instruction as we know it will disappear because traditional search engines will be replaced by ones that use artificial intelligence to undertake deep data analysis of the contents of webpages and databases. Decisions about which databases to access and how to weigh results will become the purview of machines, not people.<sup>41</sup> We should not fret, though. When bibliographic instruction is no longer needed, librarians will still be necessary. (No doubt they will be called upon to teach doctoral students in the field of modern religious history to read cursive so that those students can conduct research using the handwritten documents in our archives.<sup>42</sup>)

Speaking of which, our archives and rare book collections, which are our unique content, will eventually be the main focus of library collections. These collections, and jobs related to archives, will survive the coming of intelligent machines. Archives and rare book staffing requirements may even eclipse that of digitization units when we reach a tipping point where everything capable of being photographed or copyright cleared from the past will have a digital surrogate, and new information is all born digital. Furthermore, our archives will include not only religious texts, but realia like church anniversary mugs and plates, stained glass windows from houses of worship that have closed, and many other objects besides. So libraries will double as museums that require preservationists, archivists, curators, and those who can create holograms as digital back-ups of the objects they contain.

Naturally, traditional theological libraries will get into the swing of creating apps and skills, so our ranks will include those with programming skills. Equally important, as artificial intelligence in the field of religious information and religious praxis blossoms, cutting-edge libraries will develop research and development units that will assist faculty with market analysis, securing grants and venture capital, and locating partners for bringing new AI-enabled devices and software to production for use in congregational and other settings.

<sup>41</sup>Even now we are on the cusp of replacing traditional search engines with algorithms that respond with single answers rather than lists of options when patrons type in queries. For example, the Wolfram Alpha project, which is strong in the subjects of math and science, is a search engine project that does precisely this. See <http://www.wolframalpha.com>.

<sup>42</sup> Not every document can be digitized and/or rendered with a transcript for a variety of reasons, including fragility, sensitivity of contents, embargos placed by donors, and so forth.



### Where Do We Go from Here? The Choice is Ours

In sum, rather than being replaced by machines, theological librarians have the potential to find creative ways to use them without a net loss of employment opportunities. There is a caveat, however. We are at a crossroads. During the course of my research for this piece it did not escape my notice that in his book *Thinking Machines: The Quest for Artificial Intelligence and Where it is Taking Us Next*, Luke Dormehl drew on examples of AI in music, art, science, and a host of other fields but never once mentioned the subject of religion.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the Wolfram Alpha search engine, a new generation of AI-driven discovery service, includes the option to search by category. It includes headings for science, money, music, and twenty-seven others, but “religion” is completely absent.<sup>44</sup> In short, it looks like religion as a research discipline has the potential to fall into obscurity or irrelevance if, as late adopters, we wait too long before laying track of our own. At this point we can choose to be passive and possibly accept marginalization for the subject we represent, or we can take an active part and be innovators — shaping the content, format, and mode in which religious information will be presented and accessed in the age of AI. For me, religion matters; faith matters; our profession matters. So I know what I choose. And I invite you to choose too.

---

<sup>43</sup> There was one passing allusion when he described Ray Kurzweil’s concept of “the singularity” as the “techie version of the Biblical rapture” (p. 219).

<sup>44</sup> There is a subcategory for “mythology” under culture, but it only includes a few resources. The general search engine box will return some statistical information on religion, but I would surmise it is drawn from census data or perhaps the Pew Research datasets.

## Bibliography

- Custer, C. "I Tried to Make Microsoft's Chinese Chatbot Racist. Here's How she Stacked Up to Tay." Tech in Asia, August 3, 2016. <https://www.techinasia.com/tay-bad-microsofts-chinese-chatbot-racist>.
- De Virgilio, R., F. Frasinca, W. Hop, and S. Lachner. "A Reverse Engineering Approach for Automatic Annotation of Web Pages." *Multimedia Tools and Applications* 64, no. 1(2013): 119–140.
- Dormehl, Luke. *Thinking Machines: The Quest for Artificial Intelligence and Where It is Taking Us Next*. New York: TarcherPerigee, 2017.
- "Experts Predict When AI Will Exceed Human Performance." *Business Insider*, June 11, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/experts-predict-when-ai-will-exceed-human-performance-2017-6>.
- Ferrucci, David, Paul Bello, and Selmer Bringsjord. "Creativity, the Turing Test and the (Better) Lovelace Test." *Minds and Machines* 1, no. 11(2001): 3–27.
- Frey, Carl Benedikt, and Michael Osborne. *The Future of Employment*. Oxford: The Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment, 2013.
- Geraci, Robert. "Apocalyptic AI: Religion and the Promise of Artificial Intelligence." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 1 (2008): 138–66.
- Goodman, Joanna. *Robots in Law: How Artificial Intelligence is Transforming Legal Services*. Peoria, IL: Ark Group, 2016.
- Grace, Katja, John Salvatier, Allan Dafoe, et. al. "When Will AI Exceed Human Performance? Evidence from AI Professionals." Cornell University ARXIV Repository. Submitted by authors May 30, 2017, with DOI [arXiv:1705.08807v2](https://arxiv.org/abs/1705.08807); <https://arxiv.org/abs/1705.08807>.
- Herzfeld, Noreen. "A New Member of the Family? The Continuum of Being, Artificial Intelligence, and the Image of God." *Theology and Science* no. 3 (2007): 235–247.
- Horton, Helena. "Microsoft Deletes 'Teen Girl' AI After It Became a Hitler Loving Sex Robot within 24 Hours." *The Telegraph*, March 24, 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/03/24/microsofts-teen-girl-ai-turns-into-a-hitler-loving-sex-robot-wit/>.
- Hutson, Matthew. "When will Alexa, Google Assistant and Other 'Chatbots' Finally Talk to Us Like Real People?" *Science*, June 20, 2017. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/when-will-alexa-google-assistant-and-other-chatbots-finally-talk-us-real-people>.
- Kunze, Lauren. "On Chatbots." *TechCrunch*, February 16, 2016. <https://techcrunch.com/2016/02/16/on-chatbots/>.
- Locklair, Gary. "Intelligent Computers in a Christian Worldview." *Lutheran Mission Matters* 24, no. 3 (2016): 359–70.
- Lovejoy, Ben. "Behind the Scenes of Human Curation at Apple Music, as Company Ups the Ante on Licensing." *9 to 5 MAC*, July 18, 2016. <https://9to5mac.com/2016/07/18/apple-music-human-curation-licensing-fees/>.
- Mannes, John. "WTF is Machine Learning?" *TechCrunch*, October 23, 2016. <https://techcrunch.com/2016/10/23/wtf-is-machine-learning/>.
- McNeal, Michele L., and David Newyear. "Introducing Chatbots in Libraries." *Library Technology Reports* 49, no. 8 (2013): 1–10.
- Mohammed, Mohssen, Muhammad Badruddin Khan, and Eihab Bashier Mohammed Bashier. *Machine Learning: Algorithms and Applications*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2017.
- Russell, Stuart, and Peter Norvig. *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010.
- Talley, Nancy B. "Imagining the Use of Intelligent Agents and Artificial Intelligence in Academic Law Libraries." *Law Library Journal* 108, no. 3 (2016–19): 383–401.

## ***Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access***

by Jennifer Woodruff Tait, Editor, *Theological Librarianship*

In June 2017, on the ATLANTIS discussion list — a forum for communication, debate, news, and assistance shared among ATLA members and others — conversation arose around a February 2017 article by Jeffrey Beall. Beall, scholarly communications librarian at the University of Colorado at Denver, explained in the article in *Biochemica Medica* (<http://www.biochemia-medica.com/2017/27/273>)<sup>1</sup> why he had taken down his famous blog, Scholarly Open Access, and its equally famous list of supposed predatory open access journals.

*Theological Librarianship* has, of course, always been open access (OA). As you'll read below, a commitment to demonstrating that an OA journal can operate in a non-predatory fashion and publish scholarship for the benefit of a community is woven into the very beginning of ATLA's academic publishing program. So we thought it would be good to continue the conversation here.

Several of our authors focus specifically on issues raised by Beall, his list, and his article. Brad Ost explains how we might come up with better ways to evaluate OA publications than by using Beall's method. Barnaby Hughes tells of his time serving on Beall's appeals board. And Gary Daught seeks to answer this question: just how many religious and theological studies journals are actually predatory according to Beall's list? Andy Keck then reminds ATLA of our own history in birthing an OA journal, and Lisa Gonzalez concludes with lessons learned from becoming the publisher of *New Theology Review* and making it an OA journal.

We hope all of this sparks further discussion in future issues of *TL*, on ATLANTIS, and at our annual conference.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.biochemia-medica.com/2017/27/273>

## Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

### Better Standards for OA Journals

by Brad Ost, Theology and Philosophy Librarian, AUC Woodruff Library, Atlanta, GA

The op-ed piece by Jeffrey Beall in the February 2017 issue of *Biochemia Medica*, followed by the announcement that Cabell's International ([www.cabells.com](http://www.cabells.com)) would be offering a subscription-based whitelist/blacklist of Open Access (OA) journals, has led to renewed discussion of deceptive practices within OA publishing. The reaction to Beall's at times provocative position has revealed a fault line among librarians and scholarly communications specialists. Some think his work was a helpful reference standing as a vanguard against an ever-burgeoning assault upon legitimate OA publishing. Others thought Beall was not only wrongheaded in his approach but also antagonistic to the whole OA enterprise. Every flavor in between has also been represented. Added to these are both favorable and unfavorable reactions to Cabell's creation of a similar list and its demand of payment for its use. What appears to be lost in this conversation is any reflection on how this diverse positioning affects the absolutely critical faculty perceptions of OA publishing.

Faculty communication is at or near the top of every academic librarian's list of daily challenges. How do we get faculty to recommend books? How do we get them to promote the library and its staff to their students? How do we get them to fully appreciate the value of all the library has to offer? And how do we get them to buy into OA publishing? The task seems Sisyphean at times. Most faculty members find that it's easier to stay within the mainstream of paywall publishing than to venture out into the uncharted and unregulated streams of OA. And they have good reason.

The publish-or-perish model is still the norm on most higher education campuses. And that pressure is compounded by the push to publish in prestigious and reputable journals. Despite training that explains the reputable nature of a high percentage of OA journals (especially in the STEM disciplines), and the worthiness of such a cause to the academic community, the trend toward paywall publishing persists. Faculty often acknowledge that the academic community could flourish to a greater degree under a legitimate OA model, but with a "not in my backyard" twist. After tenure has been achieved a faculty member might be a wholehearted champion of the OA cause — but not before. Added to all this is the deepening confusion over predatory/deceptive publishers and why there isn't some sort of universal standard that will make straight what now seems hopelessly tangled. The message faculty members seem to have settled on is "get your house in order before you ask me to risk my tenure hopes."

Librarians could do much more to assure faculty of the reliability and integrity of OA publishers by implementing a model similar to the one adopted in the creation of the Counter Compliancy project (I'm sure I'm not the first to suggest such a model for OA). As the Counter Compliancy website ([www.projectcounter.org](http://www.projectcounter.org)) states, "Counter is a non-profit organization supported by a global community of library, publisher and vendor members, who contribute to the development of the Code of Practice ... that enables publishers and vendors to report usage of their electronic resources in a consistent way." Eschewing both the lone-crusader and private corporation pay-for-play models, this new model could be created both by and for librarians, OA specialists, and OA publishers.

Under the auspices of, for example, an organization such as SPARC ([www.sparcopen.org](http://www.sparcopen.org)), and funded by institutions of higher education and grants, this model would reject the white hat/black hat dichotomy. Rather, a set of criteria would be established, similar to Cabell's listing (<http://www.cabells.com/blacklist-criteria>). If a publisher wanted to have the SPARC OA Journal of Distinction seal (similar perhaps to the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval!) placed on its masthead, it would fill out the necessary acknowledgments required for the criteria. SPARC would vet the answers, and if they were found to be truthful the publisher would get the seal. Publishers wouldn't be forced to apply for the seal and SPARC wouldn't be making any judgments about any who didn't apply. They would only be attesting to the worthiness of those who did get the seal.

Another organization that appears to be on the right track is Quality Open Access Market ([www.qoam.eu](http://www.qoam.eu)), which provides scores for journals based upon academic crowdsourcing. Having this industry standard would turn a weakness

in the OA publishing model into a strength. It would also show faculty and tenure committees that the OA publishing industry could reliably police themselves.

If the Beall discussion has shown us anything, it is that a better compliance model is needed. When that has been accomplished we will have taken a huge step toward our collective goal of making research available to all.



## Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

### Peer-reviewing the Publishers: the Scholarly Open Access Appeals Board, 2013-2016

by Barnaby Hughes, ATLA, Chicago, IL

At the beginning of 2017, librarians, researchers and publishers the world over were stunned to discover that Jeffrey Beall's *Scholarly Open Access* blog and its blacklist of "potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers" had been taken down. Yet, in the age of the Internet, nothing can ever really be removed. Thanks to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, Beall's blog can still be consulted. Yet, if Beall's voice has largely disappeared from the debates over open-access publishing, it has by no means fallen silent. In a June 2017 issue of the Croatian journal *Biochemia Medica* devoted to predatory publishing, Beall reflected on the brief history of his much-read blog:

"Over the five years I published my blog and its list, publishers and standalone journals constantly tried various means of getting off the lists. Over time the requests to remove journals and publishers increased in number, as more and more universities recommended the lists or used them as official blacklists. Also, the methods publishers used became more intense.

Often owners of predatory publishing operations would email me, extolling the virtues of their journals, describing the rigor of their peer review and the credentials of their esteemed editorial boards. Some of them did a self-analysis using the criteria document I used and made available, and without exception these self-analyses found that the publisher didn't meet any of the criteria — not even close — and deserved to be removed from the list immediately."<sup>1</sup>

The above remarks are the closest that Beall gets to describing the work of his appeals board. As a member of that board, I read many of those emails and self-analyses from publishers who appealed their inclusion on his lists. In what follows, based primarily on my own experience, I describe the creation, composition, and workings of the appeals board and discuss in more or less detail each of the nineteen appeals that Beall sent to us. Unless otherwise noted, all references are to emails sent or received by the author.

#### The Appeals Board

On February 14, 2013, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the Canadian Center of Science and Education was threatening to sue Jeffrey Beall. In addition to removal from his blacklist, the center asked for \$10,000 in legal fees and damages.<sup>2</sup> As far as I am aware, this was the first lawsuit that Beall was threatened with, just over a year after he had begun *Scholarly Open Access*. This lawsuit, I believe, also provided the immediate impetus for the creation of the appeals board, which was announced on February 27, 2013: "This blog will be adding an appeal process soon. If any publisher or independent journal feels that it should not be included on one of the two lists (publishers, independent journals), a process will be in place to handle appeals. The appeal process will involve a blind review by a three-member advisory board that will study the appeal and make a recommendation (keep, remove) to the website owner."<sup>3</sup> I applied to join the board on March 1. Beall replied three hours later saying that I was one of only four applicants. One of the four, he noted, was seeking "ethical clearance." He must have decided as a result to augment his initially conceived three-member board, since he accepted all four of us. That same day, he amended his blog to show that board members were no longer needed.

One week later, on March 7, 2013, Beall introduced the board members to each other. At first, all of us were men: a mixture of researchers, editors, and publishers. Later, a female librarian joined our ranks. Beall then described to us

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Beall. "What I Learned From Predatory Publishers." *Biochemia Medica* 27, no. 2 (2017): 273-9. <https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2017.029>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Librarians-Rally-Behind/137329/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://scholarlyoa.com/2013/02/27/appeal-process-to-be-implemented-for-this-blogs-lists/>.

how the appeals process would function, a process he publicized on the blog four days later: “Publishers can appeal the inclusion of their journal or publisher on this blog’s lists. If you believe that your journal should not be included on the list, please send an email to the blog’s owner, Jeffrey Beall, at [email address redacted]. In the email, please state the reasons why you believe your publisher or journal should not be included. The email will be forwarded to a four-member advisory board. The board will then review the publisher’s website and conduct on the publisher’s operations. The board will then advise the blog’s author to retain or remove the listing. Appeals are limited to one every 60 days.”<sup>4</sup> When forwarding the first appeal, Beall mentioned that he wanted us to “be like peer-reviewers.” And that is primarily how I thought of our work, peer-reviewing the publishers. The publishers did not know who we were, but we certainly knew who they were.

### The Publisher Appeals: 2013-2014

We received our first appeal on March 13, 2013, from an Eastern European publisher of sixteen (now nineteen) journals, primarily in science and engineering. By way of explaining how this publisher came to be on his list, Beall shared with us four negative emails that he had received about this publisher. One was from an academic librarian in Texas and the other three were from professors in Spain, Portugal, and Illinois. They primarily complained about the publisher’s conferences rather than its journals, which did not charge author publication fees. The two recommendations that I retain, one of which is my own, recommend accepting the appeal.

Appeals continued to come in at about the rate of one per month. The second, received on April 15, 2013, came from a standalone journal/publisher in the social sciences and humanities. Some of Beall’s reasons for blacklisting the journal included its claims to be American and to have an American address, even though it was based in India. Moreover, it boasted an unrealistic three-day peer review. In addition to his correspondence with the publisher, Beall also included an email from an Indian researcher. In our comments on the appeal, one board member noted that the editor-in-chief was described on the journal’s website as being located in “Taiwan, Province of China.” Another board member used iThenticate to discover that two published articles contained plagiarized material. We unanimously recommended that the appeal be rejected.

On May 14, 2013, we received an appeal from a South Asian publisher of scientific journals. Supporting documentation included an email from an American academic denying that he had agreed to serve on the editorial board of one of this publisher’s journals. In my comments, I noted that only three of the publisher’s nine journals had published any issues. I noted with curiosity that a Google search had revealed an academic claiming (on his CV) to be on the editorial board of one of the journals, though he was not listed on the journal’s website. I also mentioned that the aforementioned academic who had been wrongly listed as an editorial board member was no longer listed as such on the journal’s website. In conclusion, I argued that the publisher did not appear to be predatory, just new and inexperienced. I recommended keeping an eye on it; another board member agreed with me.

Just a day after receiving this appeal, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that Beall had been threatened with another lawsuit, this time by the publisher OMICS, seeking a preposterous \$1 billion in damages.<sup>5</sup> This publisher, who incidentally never appealed its inclusion on the blacklist, was charged for deceptive practices three years later by the Federal Trade Commission.<sup>6</sup>

On June 20, 2013, Beall sent us two appeals. The first came from an Indian publisher that seemed very new and whose journals had little content; two of us agreed that it did not appear to be predatory. We did, however, agree that the second appeal, from a Filipino publisher, probably was predatory. Not only did it claim a bogus impact factor based on dubious metrics, two of its journals claimed the same ISSN and the publisher allowed escort services to advertise on its website.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://scholarlyoa.com/appeals/>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Publisher-Threatens-to-Sue/139243/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2016/08/ftc-charges-academic-journal-publisher-omics-group-deceived>.

Beginning with an appeal from an “American” journal on August 16, 2013, the publisher appeals started to get more and more interesting. Like many predatory journals, this journal’s title proudly proclaimed it to be American, even though the only thing American about it was its Delaware registration. All of its authors were from Africa and Asia. The journal was interesting because its publisher had clearly read the material on *Scholarly Open Access* and understood why the journal might be considered predatory. He admitted that the journal’s first “real” issue was actually its third; the first two consisted of conference proceedings as part of the journal’s “soft” launch. He furthermore claimed that 90 percent of the journal’s authors had been published for free. When I recently revisited this journal, I was shocked to discover that a subscription is now required to view articles.

In addition to the publisher’s appeal letter, Beall also forwarded to us his own email to the publisher pointing out plagiarism, and a recent *Library Out Loud* blog post concerning the publisher. The latter was particularly concerned that SCOPUS was indexing this predatory journal. In my comments on the appeal, I pointed out that the publisher had excused the poor editorial quality of the journal by saying it was done by volunteers. Moreover, I noted that no contact information was provided for the editor-in-chief. I was unable to judge the quality of articles because the website was down for maintenance. I continued: “The journal’s section policies are bizarre, listing a section for Arabic Publications. The editors [sic] of that section are: Tony Montana! The journal’s most recent issue, however, does not show any Arabic-language articles despite the fact that many of the published articles are written by authors with Arabic names. I also don’t understand how [the publisher] can say that ‘Copyrights of published papers belongs to the authors with first publication rights granted to the journal.’ The journal itself says otherwise with its CC BY license.” In short, this was an easy appeal to reject.

The next appeal, on Sept 27, 2013, came from a controversial American publisher who noted that one of his editors was considering resigning because her university considered the journal to be predatory, and that a conference attendee had also asked him about being on the blacklist. Beall included the publisher on his list because of well-publicized instances of plagiarism, which the publisher had failed to retract. For that and much else, the board unanimously recommended that the appeal be rejected, and it was.

Around this time I received my first spam request to act as a peer reviewer to a blacklisted journal, the *African Educational Research Journal*. The title of the manuscript was “The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Penteco/charismatic believer.” Requests like this — whether to be an author or peer reviewer, editorial board member or conference presenter — are often what alerted Beall and his international network of tipsters to the existence of these predatory journals. When I forwarded the email to Beall, he advised me to politely decline the request, which I did. This generated an automatic response from the journal: “Thank you for your mail. We shall respond to it soon.” They never did.

On December 30, 2013, Beall sent us another controversial appeal, this time from a large UAE-based publisher of more than sixty open access journals. Again there were issues of plagiarism. Beall was not alone in criticizing this publisher; *The Scholarly Kitchen* and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) also did. The appeals board unanimously recommended that the publisher remain on the blacklist.

Beall sent us an appeal on April 4, 2014, from a “Chinese” publisher registered in Switzerland that he had blogged about and added to his list just months earlier. The publisher’s appeal comprised an eight-page document responding to each of Beall’s “Criteria for Determining Predatory Open-Access Publishers.”<sup>7</sup> In my comments, I noted that the publisher was a member of OASPA, that OASPA had just conducted its own investigation of the publisher, and that OASPA was satisfied that the publisher had met its membership criteria. Unfortunately, OASPA failed to provide any of the reasons behind its conclusions. Additionally, I expressed disappointment that the publisher had responded to Beall’s criteria, but not to the specific concerns detailed in his blog post. I recommended that the publisher remain on the blacklist “pending further information.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> At the time of the appeal, Beall’s criteria document was in its second of three editions: <http://scholarlyoa.com/2012/11/30/criteria-for-determining-predatory-open-access-publishers-2nd-edition/>.

<sup>8</sup> See below for the publisher’s second appeal on October 6, 2015.

On April 12, 2014, Beall notified me that one of the board members had resigned. He announced the appointment of a replacement on May 13. A fellow academic librarian, she was the board's first female member. At the same time, Beall presented a new appeal from an African publisher of more than 100 journals. This publisher also responded at great length to each of Beall's criteria. While none of us could come up with any major problems with this publisher, we nevertheless concluded that it published poor scholarship and recommended that it remain on the list.

Although *Science* journalist John Bohannon's sting had occurred the previous year, its repercussions were still being felt.<sup>9</sup> On September 8, 2014, we received an appeal from the publisher of a journal that had accepted one of Bohannon's fake papers. Instead of responding to every one of Beall's criteria, this publisher addressed three topics: publishing fees; scholastic standards; and location. The publisher concluded by welcoming suggestions and comments "from experts like you who are active in open access journal publishing" on how the publishing process and journal quality could be improved.

This was a frequent refrain. Many publishers seemed to treat Beall as a publishing consultant who could help them improve their businesses. Commenting on the appeal, I expressed incredulity that a publisher who purported to be concerned with keeping costs down actually be located in Silicon Valley. Moreover, one of its journals was overly broad in scope, publishing articles about microfinance repayments in Nigeria, population policies in China, and Gothic fiction. Another board member noted that the publisher failed to mention the sting in his appeal and that the editor of the journal that published the bogus paper had not resigned from his position. We recommended that the appeal be rejected.

### The Publisher Appeals: 2015-2016

Nearly a year went by without another appeal, so I wrote to Beall on June 1, 2015, asking if there were any appeals forthcoming. He responded the next day saying that he might have one coming soon and that he was having trouble "keeping up with everything." On August 11, 2015, he forwarded a two-page appeal from a Canadian publisher of scientific journals. I was late in weighing in on this appeal, but my fellow board members unanimously recommended that the publisher remain on the list; and so it remained.

The "Chinese" publisher whose first appeal we had considered in April 2014 sent a second one on October 6, 2015. This was the only time that a publisher appealed more than once, and it was well past the 60-day minimum time between appeals that Beall had asked for. Although I don't remember being aware of it at the time, this second appeal contained the only evidence I have that Beall sent our comments to the publishers along with his decision to keep the publisher or journal on one of his blacklists. The comments were kept anonymous, of course, as befits peer reviewing. Thus, the publisher's appeal comprised a thirteen-page response to Beall's criteria as well as a three-page response to our comments on the previous appeal.

The response to my comments was illuminating and yet disappointing. The majority of the response consisted of a refutation of the blog post that the publisher had not addressed earlier. This was detailed and generally convincing. The publisher did not, however, share with the appeals board any details of the OASPA investigation that I had wondered about, though it was evident from the publisher's comments that Beall had not shared with the board all of the relevant documentation he had received. Finally, the publisher rightly noted that my recommendation to keep the publisher on the list was based on presumption of guilt. One board member and I were satisfied with the appeal and recommended accepting it, while another recounted additional evidence against the publisher, but recommended a compromise: namely, that the publisher be removed from the list, but that one of its journals (the one with the most retractions) be retained. The last board member to weigh in recommended rejecting the appeal based on poor publication ethics.

Just three days later, Beall apologetically sent us another publisher appeal. I think he would have preferred to space them out more, but he was beginning to feel pressured by this publisher, who claimed that four months earlier he had

---

<sup>9</sup> J. Bohannon, "Who's Afraid of Peer Review?" *Science* 342, (2013):60-65. <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/suppl/2013/10/03/342.6154.60.DC1>.

sent Beall an appeal that had gone answered.<sup>10</sup> The publisher then threatened legal action, which he did in an email to the president of the university where Beall is employed, claiming that Beall was abusing public property by responding to his blog during work hours and using his university email address for all communications. This publisher also brought up OMICS' threatened lawsuit, implying that Beall was obviously guilty. We unanimously agreed that this publisher should remain on the list.

On November 11, 2015, Beall sent another appeal with an apology, this time for the increased frequency of appeals, noting that his blacklists were gaining traction. Unusually, the publisher whose appeal we were asked to consider was not an open-access publisher. Beall considered the publisher to be misleading authors into thinking that it was open access by charging author publication fees and then claiming to make articles openly accessible on its website for at least three years. On November 23, Beall sent us additional information about the publisher that he had received from an Australian researcher who wished to remain anonymous. This person provided evidence of multiple false representations made by the publisher, especially about the editorial board members of its journals. We unanimously recommended that this publisher remain on the list.

Beall sent us the appeal of a small Canadian scientific publisher of a single journal on January 18, 2016. I commented as follows: "My impression is that this publisher isn't predatory, just low-quality — but not as low-quality as some of the others we have rejected. It seems to be providing an outlet for African and Asian scholars to publish in a Western journal at a low price. In general, the journal appears to be too broad in scope to be useful to anyone except the authors. I believe it's what you would describe as a paper mill. Whether or not the scholarship is any good is another matter. I'm not qualified to say." The others recommended rejecting the appeal, one noting that an editorial board member had passed away four years previously, but was still listed on the journal's website!

Separately, on the same day, Beall sent a second appeal, also from a standalone journal. Again, I think he was feeling pressured, since this appeal was sent by the journal's attorney, an escalation based on lack of response. It was the first such appeal from an attorney that we had received. The lawyer claimed that the journal manager had unsuccessfully tried to contact Beall on May 15, 2015, and again on May 30, 2015. He also referenced the OMICS lawsuit, but by way of dismissal, saying that he would not use such tactics, since he preferred tact and common sense. He even sympathized with Beall's situation, saying that he too had worked in academia.

By this time, I was busy finishing the last semester of my MLIS program and so did not comment on the last two appeals, which were sent on February 23, 2016, and July 6, 2016. The first was from a publisher of pseudoscience. Beall sent further information about this publisher on March 11, namely a blog post referring to a paper denying climate change that had appeared in one of this publisher's journals. One board member recommended rejecting the appeal, citing unethical peer review practices. The second appeal came from a UK-based publisher. Beall's reasons for listing the publisher included excessive APCs, transfer of copyright to the publisher, and lack of peer review. The other three board members all recommended rejecting the appeal.

On November 17, 2016, I sent Beall a letter of resignation from the appeals board, which was not acknowledged. A few months later, I discovered that the blog had been taken down. I have had no further contact with any of the board members. In preparation for this article I wrote Beall another letter, to which he has also not responded.

## Conclusion

Serving on the *Scholarly Open Access* appeals board throughout its four years was a valuable and fascinating experience. I cannot say that I learned more about open access publishing and its predatory underbelly from considering publisher appeals than I (or anyone else) could have learned from simply reading Beall's blog. However, the experience brought home to me the reality of predatory publishing in a way that I could not have fully grasped otherwise. I also realize how subjective our judgments could be. I don't believe, however, that they were any more subjective than those of peer reviewers the world over, though they were of greater import, affecting far more people than a single author. In summary, based on the above appeals, the most serious allegations against predatory publishers seem to be two:

<sup>10</sup> This statement agrees with Beall's own admission to me back in June about having trouble "keeping up with everything."



1. Plagiarism: failing to detect and retract plagiarized articles and plagiarizing the websites of other publishers for policy statements; and
2. False representation: copying or imitating the name of a well-established journal, pretending to be American, putting the names of Western academics on editorial boards without permission, and boasting of fake impact factors or being indexed by something that is not an index.<sup>11</sup>

By way of comparison, some of these complaints are identical to the three charges brought by the FTC against OMICS: misrepresentations regarding journal publishing, misrepresentations regarding conferences, and deceptive failure to disclose publishing fees.<sup>12</sup> The misrepresentations regarding journal publishing specifically concerned impact factor, indexing, peer review, and editorial board members.

While librarians, publishers, and researchers continue to debate the merits and methods of Jeffrey Beall's blacklist, it remains to be seen who or what will fill the void left by his blog's absence. More fundamentally, however, we must continue to question current business models and innovate more efficient ones in our ongoing efforts to make scholarly publishing truly sustainable.

---

<sup>11</sup> I have deliberately not mentioned APCs, for although most predatory open-access publishers do charge author publication fees, they are much lower than those charged by reputable publishers.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/cases/160826omicscmpt.pdf>.

## Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

### Religious Studies Journals in Beall's List

by Gary F. Daught, Director of Libraries, Milligan College, Milligan College, TN

As was widely reported in the scientific and academic press in mid-January of 2017 (e.g., Inside Higher ED,<sup>1</sup> Retraction Watch,<sup>2</sup> and Nature.com<sup>3</sup>), “Beall’s List,” the well-known and controversial online blacklist of so-called “predatory” open access publishers and journals created by University of Colorado-Denver librarian Jeffrey Beall, was suddenly taken down. By Beall’s own account in the *Biochemica Medica* article, his online Scholarly Open Access blog was taken down under “intense pressure from my employer, the University of Colorado Denver, and fearing for my job.”

Although the blog has been officially removed from the web, I found cached versions of Beall’s “List of Publishers”<sup>4</sup> and “List of Standalone Journals”<sup>5</sup> using Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine. The latest page captures are dated January 11, 2017, and reflect content updated by Beall on December 31, 2016. (A cached copy of Beall’s List has also been posted here.)<sup>6</sup>

Others can comment more specifically on the efficacy of Beall’s List. I was curious to discover if and to what degree his List includes religious or theological studies journal content in order to assess the problem of “predatory open access journals” in these disciplines.

#### Methodology

Between August 7-11, 2017, I reviewed all 1,163 links on Beall’s “List of Publishers”<sup>7</sup> and I browsed his “List of Standalone Journals”<sup>8</sup> for titles related to religious or theological studies. For the purpose of the survey, I excluded dead or broken links, and links that returned “access forbidden” or server timeout errors. (I recognize that some of the timeout errors may have been generated by Wayback Machine.) I then reviewed journal lists for relevant titles on each publisher or journal site. For the purpose of the survey, I excluded broad multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary, generic humanities, philosophy, area studies (e.g., East Asian), and cultural studies journals unless they included explicit reference to religion or religious studies. I also abandoned any sites that attempted to send me their journals list as a downloadable file.

I created a table listing journal title, ISSN, publisher, location, journal-level editor and editorial board, whether peer-reviewed, whether there was any content (at least one article), if the journal is current, the contact method, and if the journal charged an author publication fee (APC).

#### Findings

The vast majority of the publishers on Beall’s List are related to science, technology, medicine, or business, though many also include humanities and social sciences journals. As indicated on the table, I identified sixty-seven journal titles from twenty-six publishers related to religious or theological studies. Of the twenty-six publishers, the journals from ten (marked with \*) were largely duplicated by similar sounding titles (the websites looked very similar and the Author Guidelines were virtually the same in all cases). Only one of the journals from these ten “publishers” had any article content.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/01/18/librarians-list-predatory-journals-reportedly-removed-due-threats-and-politics>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://retractionwatch.com/2017/01/17/bealls-list-potential-predatory-publishers-go-dark/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nature.com/news/controversial-website-that-lists-predatory-publishers-shuts-down-1.21328>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111172306/https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111172309/https://scholarlyoa.com/individual-journals/>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://beallslist.weebly.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111172306/https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170111172309/https://scholarlyoa.com/individual-journals/>.

A vast majority of identified journals did not have assigned ISSNs (though I did not confirm the validity of those that did). Actual publication location of many journals was suspect because complete addresses were not supplied, and contact information was limited to a generic email address. All the journals claimed to offer peer review prior to publication, though most lacked a journal-level editor or editorial board. Most indicated (though some did not) that an author APC would be charged for articles submitted and/or accepted for publication — typically in the \$150-300 per article range.

Of the sixty-seven journals titles identified, only twelve (18 percent) had any article content (at least one article; highlighted in green). Most of the other titles indicated in one way or another that their ISSN was pending, and they were trying to attract both editors and authors. Of the twelve titles with any content, only six had both an ISSN and an identified editor or editorial board. Four can be considered current with content published in 2016.

One journal, *Ideal Journal of Psychology and Theology* (highlighted in yellow) had two articles, though neither related to either psychology or theology. Another similar title, *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (also highlighted in yellow), appears to have been hijacked from a journal of the same name<sup>9</sup> published by Biola University. Although the content, editor, and editorial board information differs, the bogus version actually uses Biola’s address and phone number on its contact page.

### Assessment and Conclusion

In the context of Beall’s List as a whole — which encompasses thousands of journal titles oriented primarily toward science, technology, medicine, or business — religious or theological studies journals comprise a very, very small percentage. Further article-level evaluation of the twelve journal titles with content might reveal legitimate research, which could call into question their presence on Beall’s list. Fifty-five out of sixty-seven (82 percent) of the identified titles (including ten titles from the ten very similar looking “publisher” websites) that had no content whatsoever suggests a passive effort to attract authors looking for a publishing venue and possibly to extract publication fees, though to date they apparently haven’t been very successful. For example, the publisher Journal Network, which launched in 2014, has only published three articles in just three of twenty-four of their Religious Studies titles.

Although I believe Beall has correctly identified a problem with “predatory journals” in the open access publishing space that is worthy of our concern (leaving aside that some of his criteria may simply reflect a prejudice against non-western academic traditions and methods), my survey results lead me to conclude that the specter of the predatory journal is outsized by actual reality in religious and theological studies. No scholar should publish research in a venue that hasn’t been properly evaluated and vetted. But as a part of that evaluation process, no scholar should allow the mere specter of the problem to prejudice the general validity of open access as a legitimate model of scholarly communication. Fortunately, there are many other open access journals in religious and theological studies that didn’t get singled out on Beall’s List. These can and should be seriously considered as venues of high-quality scholarly research communication.

<b>Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall’s “List of Publishers” and “List of Standalone Journals” webpages as cached on Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine</b>											
	<b>Journal Title</b>	<b>ISSN</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Editorial Board</b>	<b>Peer Review</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>APC</b>
1	<i>American Open Religions Journal</i>	--	Research and Knowledge Publication*	New York	Y	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$300
2	<i>Asian American Religions Research Journal</i>	--	Asian and American Research Publishing Group*	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$200
3	<i>British Open Journal of Religions</i>	--	British Open Research Publications*	Birmingham, UK and New York	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$200

<sup>9</sup> <http://journals.biola.edu/jpt>.

<b>Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall's "List of Publishers" and "List of Standalone Journals" webpages as cached on Internet Archive's Wayback Machine</b>											
	<b>Journal Title</b>	<b>ISSN</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Editorial Board</b>	<b>Peer Review</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>APC</b>
4	<i>Canadian Open Religions Journal</i>	--	Canadian Research Publication*	Toronto, Canada	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$300
5	<i>European Open Religion Journal</i>	--	European Union Research Publishing*	Birmingham, UK and New York	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$300
6	<i>European Journal of Science and Theology</i>	1842-8517	Ecozone	Romania	Y	Y	Y	Y	December 2016	Yahoo email	200-350 Euro
7	<i>Ideal Journal of Psychology and Theology</i>	2067-7720	Ideal True Scholar	Nigeria	N	N	Y	Y**	January 2016	publisher email	\$60
8	<i>International Journal of African Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	Y	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
9	<i>International Journal of Agnosticism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	Y	April 2015	webform	\$145
10	<i>International Journal of American Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
11	<i>International Journal of Asian Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	Y	January 2015	webform	\$145
12	<i>International Journal of Astrology</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
13	<i>International Journal of Atheism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
14	<i>International Journal of Bahá'í Faith</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
15	<i>International Journal of Buddhism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	Y	October 2014	webform	\$145
16	<i>International Journal of Christianity</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
17	<i>International Journal of Comparative Religion</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
18	<i>International Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies</i>	--	CARI Journals	Kenya	Y	Y	Y	N	--	email	\$125

**Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall's "List of Publishers" and "List of Standalone Journals" webpages as cached on Internet Archive's Wayback Machine**

	Journal Title	ISSN	Publisher	Location	Editor	Editorial Board	Peer Review	Content	Current	Contact	APC
19	<i>International Journal of Divinity</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
20	<i>International Journal of European Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
21	<i>International Journal of Hindi Research</i>	2455-2232	Gupta Publications	India	Y	Y	Y	Y	December 2016	address, phone, email	?
22	<i>International Journal of Hinduism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
23	<i>International Journal of Islam</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
24	<i>International Journal of Jainism &amp; Jaina</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
25	<i>International Journal of Judaism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
26	<i>International Journal of Latin American Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
27	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
28	<i>International Journal of Mythology</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
29	<i>International Journal of Neopaganism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
30	<i>International Journal of New Age Beliefs</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
31	<i>International Journal of Pacific Island Religions</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
32	<i>International Journal of Pastoral Counseling</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages



**Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall's "List of Publishers" and "List of Standalone Journals" webpages as cached on Internet Archive's Wayback Machine**

	Journal Title	ISSN	Publisher	Location	Editor	Editorial Board	Peer Review	Content	Current	Contact	APC
33	<i>International Journal of Philosophy and Theology</i>	2333-5769	American Research Institute for Policy Development	Madison, WI	Y	Y	Y	Y	December 2015	webform	\$200
34	<i>International Journal of Religion</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
35	<i>International Journal of Religion</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
36	<i>International Journal of Religious Mysteries</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
37	<i>International Journal of Religious Studies</i>	1352-4623	FSSH Scholarly Journals	New York	Y	Y	Y	Y	2016	publisher address, phone, email	Not OA
38	<i>International Journal of Sikhism</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
39	<i>International Journal of the Shintō Religion</i>	--	Journal Network	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	webform	\$145
40	<i>International Open Journal of Religion</i>	--	Academic and Scientific Publishing*	New York	Y	N	Y	Y	April 2014	publisher email	\$300
41	<i>International Research Journal of Religious Theology</i>	--	Spring Journals	?	N	N	?	N	--	webform	?
42	<i>Journal of African Religions</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
43	<i>Journal of Buddhism</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
44	<i>Journal of Chinese Folk Religion</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
45	<i>Journal of Church History</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages

<b>Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall's "List of Publishers" and "List of Standalone Journals" webpages as cached on Internet Archive's Wayback Machine</b>											
	<b>Journal Title</b>	<b>ISSN</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Editorial Board</b>	<b>Peer Review</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>APC</b>
46	<i>Journal of European Folklore Research</i>	2148-189x	MacroWorld	UK and Turkey	Y	Y	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	?
47	<i>Journal of Hinduism</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
48	<i>Journal of Homiletics</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
49	<i>Journal of Islamic Perspective and Culture</i>	2148-9403	MacroWorld	UK and Turkey	Y	Y	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	?
50	<i>Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture</i>	2333-5904	American Research Institute for Policy Development	Madison, WI	Y	Y	Y	Y	December 2016	webform	\$200
51	<i>Journal of Jainism</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
52	<i>Journal of Liturgy</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
53	<i>Journal of Pastoral Theology</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
54	<i>Journal of Psychology and Theology</i>	--	Hijacked title name from Biola University	?	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
55	<i>Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies</i>	--	Research Institute for Science, Technology and Society	?	?	?	Y	?	?	?	?
56	<i>Journal of Religious Education Techniques</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages

<b>Religious Studies Journals identified from the last update (December 31, 2016) of Jeffrey Beall's "List of Publishers" and "List of Standalone Journals" webpages as cached on Internet Archive's Wayback Machine</b>											
	<b>Journal Title</b>	<b>ISSN</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Editorial Board</b>	<b>Peer Review</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>APC</b>
57	<i>Journal of Religious Studies, Buddhism and Living</i>	--	CRESCO	India	Y	Y	Y	Y	2016	publisher email	?
58	<i>Journal of Sikhism</i>	--	International Organization of Scientific Research and Development	India	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher address, phone, email	\$129, additional charge for +6 pages
59	<i>Multi International Hindi e-Research Journal</i>	2278-5965	Multi International Hindi e-Research Journal	India	Y	Y	Y	N	--	phone, email	no
60	<i>North American Open Religion Research Journal</i>	--	North American Research Publishing*	Canada and USA	Y	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$200
61	<i>Research Open Journal of Religion</i>	--	Science and Technology Publishing*	New York	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$300
62	<i>TLEP Journal of Religious and Cultural Practices</i>	--	The Leading Edge Journal Publishing Company	Nigeria?	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	?
63	<i>Universal Open Islamic Studies Journals</i>	--	Adyan Academic Press*	USA	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$200
64	<i>Universal Open Religion Journal</i>	--	Adyan Academic Press*	USA	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$200
65	<i>US Open Religions Journal</i>	--	American Research Publications*	USA	Y	Y	Y	N	--	publisher email	\$300
66	<i>VFAST Transactions on Islamic Research</i>	2309-6519	Virtual Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology	Pakistan	Y	Y	Y	Y	December 2015	publisher address, phone, email	N
67	<i>World Academic Research in Religion Studies and Human Rights</i>	4131-221x	World Academic Research Journals	UK, Nigeria, Ghana	N	N	Y	N	--	publisher email, webform	?

NOTES

\* All publisher websites essentially the same

\*\* Two articles, not related to journal scope

## Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

### How *Theological Librarianship* Came to Be, and Came to Be Open-Access

by Andrew Keck, Director of Library Services and Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

The idea of a journal had been around for a while before *Theological Librarianship* launched in 2008. The minutes from the 2000 meeting of ATLA's Publications Interest Group had one group member state that a "journal idea for the society fizzled because it seemed like extra work." By 2001, the Publications Committee, as it was then called, again brought up the idea of an "online journal" in the context of considering whether some items then appearing in the *Newsletter* might actually form the basis for an "ATLA Quarterly" journal for theological librarianship. The minutes indicate some concern about the supply of articles and the "raised expectations" for a journal as opposed to a newsletter.

During 2002, the Publications Committee considered creating a guide to, or handbook of, theological librarianship that might include a one-time supply of articles and essays to build scholarship in theological librarianship and provide a better basis for training theological librarians. The "guide" was conceived as an international collaboration, and there was a desire to be published by an international publisher to ensure global access and impact. In 2003-2004, the committee began thinking about an occasional paper series that might have different "threads" with editors and peer reviews for each thread. Questions of expense, revenue, and access emerged here too.

Under the leadership of Jack Ammerman, the idea of an occasional paper "thread" around bibliography was reformed into a proposal for the "Journal of Theological Bibliography" that came to the committee in Fall 2004 and to the ATLA Board in January 2005. The "Journal of Theological Bibliography" proposal draft from September 28, 2004, included a section on access:

*The Journal of Theological Bibliography* is an electronic journal available via the Journal's Web site. The Journal provides open access to all of it[s] content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. Such access is associated with increased readership and increased citation of an author's work. It also makes access to the information possible for students and scholars in the developing world where fees for access are prohibitive.

For historical context, the first set of international declarations around open access were in 2002-2003, with the first Creative Commons licenses released in late 2002. So the 2004 journal proposal was relatively close to the beginning of a broader open access movement.

With encouragement from the board and from membership surveys in 2005, a parallel effort was started to explore a professional journal for ATLA. Lynn Berg proposed a roundtable for the 2006 Annual Conference to explore this idea with the membership. The Committee was delighted to have more than forty members attend the roundtable. According to the *Proceedings*, "It was recommended that the journal be an open access journal." At a Publications Committee meeting at that same conference, it was noted that the launch of the *ATLA Journal of Theological Bibliography* was being postponed due to the loss of editorial assistance.

By the November 2006 meeting of the ATLA Publications Committee, it was decided to merge the efforts of the two journals into one journal. The initial scope was determined thus:

This open access journal publishes essays, columns, critical reviews, bibliographic essays and peer-reviewed articles on various aspects of theological librarianship and its contribution to theological education.

While the Committee continued to discuss how to maximize revenue and minimize cost while sketching out the journal, there was now an unambiguous commitment to "open access" and a reference to Creative Commons licensing. As the work of the journal shifted away from the Publications Committee, the editorial board became regular advocates of open access and led broader forums on open access at Duke University and the American Academy of Religion.

## Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

### Launching an Open Access Journal - Can You Make the Investment?

by Lisa Gonzalez, KnowledgeBase and License Manager Librarian, Private Academic Library Network of Indiana

While many libraries are finding ways to provide access to open access journals by modifying their collection development policies to include them or developing procedures to process open access journals alongside their paid counterparts, some libraries are also seeking further ways to support the ambitious goal of helping more paywall journals make the transition to open access.

Just as dedicating staff time to selecting, cataloging, and managing access to open access journals represents a cost in staff time for the library, so does committing the library to stepping into a new role as a publisher. I'd like to offer my reflections on the launch of an open access journal, *New Theology Review (NTR)*, while I was the electronic resources librarian at Catholic Theological Union. I'd especially like to address the costs in staff time with regard to marketing and building a reputation through familiar discovery tools authors, readers, and library selectors use to discover and evaluate an open access journal. The library will see these tools from a different perspective once it has assumed the role of publisher.

The initial launch of *NTR* was advanced by a fortuitous convergence of events: the library director's enthusiasm and commitment to open access, her direct experience with OJS software as an editor at *Theological Librarianship*, and the urgent need to find a new home for a print journal with longstanding institutional support (both faculty time and institutional funds).<sup>1</sup> The scholarly reputation of the journal was maintained by ongoing institutional support for the faculty editors, who also received a modest stipend. My role focused on providing support for improved discovery for the journal through DOI registration with Crossref, and marketing the journal's open access policies through inclusion in SHERPA/RoMEO and DOAJ. (SHERPA, Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access, is a project in the UK "dedicated to promoting the implementation and use of Open Access repositories"; RoMEO, Rights Metadata for Open Archiving, is the project which birthed SHERPA; and DOAJ, with which you may be more familiar, is the comprehensive Directory of Open Access Journals maintained by the University of Lund.)<sup>2</sup>

Librarians are familiar with DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) and Crossref as mechanisms for promoting access and discovery of electronic journals, including open access journals, but are less familiar with serving as providers of these identifiers themselves. DOIs are a key part of sharing metadata about journal articles across many online discovery mechanisms and are key to the functioning of altmetrics products. Membership in Crossref as a publisher enabled the library to assign DOIs to the articles published in *NTR*.

Crossref allows publishers eighteen months to implement DOIs on the publisher's platform, and this allowance of time was needed for learning the technical requirements for implementing DOIs using both the OJS and Crossref platforms. While the OJS platform includes a Crossref plugin, the library still needed to send the DOI metadata to Crossref in order to register the DOIs. Without proper registration, the DOIs present on the landing page for each journal article would not resolve properly. Since DOIs cannot be changed after registration, it is important for the publisher to make sure they are permanently associated with that article once the DOIs are included with the published article. Once a DOI is included with a published article, it will become available to web crawlers as well as to readers visiting the journal's website and copying the DOIs manually or through the use of citation software.

Once the library was ready to activate the OJS Crossref plugin for DOIs, and DOIs were assigned to the first issue of *NTR* that would include them, there were some difficulties transmitting the data. This resulted in a high percentage of unresolved DOIs, which indicated that readers were clicking on a DOI and receiving an error message. In retrospect, it would have been helpful for the library to have additional assistance from both OJS and Crossref. Crossref is used to working with publishers using their own platforms and expected the library as publisher to have more direct access to

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Beall, Melody Layton McMahon, Kathleen Mulhern, and Jennifer Woodruff Tait. "Libraries, Religious Publishing, and Conversations on Faith." *American Theological Library Association Summary Of Proceedings* 69 (2015): 150.

<sup>2</sup> These and many other Open Access acronyms are helpfully defined at <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/glossary.html>.



the developers of the platform. Because OJS is an open source project, support was only available through the use of discussion forums, too slow for the library's timeline for fixing the problem.

In addition to Crossref, the library worked with both SHERPA/RoMEO and DOAJ as a publisher, providing data to authors and other libraries seeking to evaluate the reputation of the journal. A SHERPA/RoMEO listing includes the authors' rights as far as self-archiving. While it may seem unnecessary to pursue this listing for an open access journal, authors may want to self-archive their open access publication for a variety of reasons — on their own website or on their own page in the library's institutional repository. Both options provide greater exposure to open access publications for potential readers and authors in their discipline.

Pursuing the SHERPA/RoMEO listing also helped the library evaluate its own standing with potential authors as an open access publisher. This required the library to interpret the journal's copyright policy according to SHERPA/RoMEO'S priorities, which included the fact that the author retained copyright while agreeing to publish using a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives license.<sup>3</sup> The library also needed to interpret the policy in light of SHERPA/RoMEO'S categories of archiving policies, determining that the journal's policies placed it in the Green category, which allows the author to archive pre-print, post-print, and/or publisher's versions of articles. The listing in SHERPA/RoMEO explicitly articulated the library's support as a publisher for the author's right to archive and share publicly different versions of their own work.<sup>4</sup>

The DOAJ listing also gave the library an opportunity to review how explicitly the commitment to open access was expressed now that the library was a publisher.<sup>5</sup> Some authors associate article processing charges (APCs) with all open access journals, and the DOAJ application asked for an explicit declaration. The journal's web page was not explicit on this matter, so wording was added to make it clear that there were no charges required to publish in the journal. The DOAJ application also asked for standard editorial policies such as whether the journal relied on double blind peer review and what the standard time frame was from submission to actual publication. This information is aimed at potential authors who would be using DOAJ to evaluate the quality of the publication and the ease of working with the publication. Pursuing DOAJ listing helped the library see its publication through the eyes of authors. Scholars seek to publish not only in journals with the appropriate scope for their work but also in journals that have a reputation for employing appropriate peer review techniques and which treat authors fairly by publishing their work in a timely manner.

While libraries may struggle to market their library services, much less the library's publishing program, effectively, marketing this open access journal through discovery tools helped illuminate the importance of reputation building from the publishers' perspective. The library's success with the journal's transition to open access benefited enormously from the accrued reputation of the journal. Ongoing support for content discovery helps maintain the journal's reputation, and is an area where librarians can more directly contribute.

As with any new library program, libraries should consider carefully how to compensate library staff equitably for the increased skill level involved in every phase of introducing a library publishing program. Faculty may have more flexibility in terms of their time commitment for this work, and will have more incentive as far as seeing the work translate directly into advancing their career within the tenure and promotion system than library staff. Libraries should be careful about evaluating a skill set that is new for library staff, and be cautious not to underestimate the time or training required to maintain an appropriate skill level for the work.

Besides supporting the editorial and production processes, marketing and reputation building are a key part of a publishing program. The library must step away from the emphasis on open access solely as a public good and vie to make the library's publications more visible and desirable in the marketplace of scholarly publishing. Without this recognition of quality and significance from authors, potential editors, and readers, the library's publications may struggle to find an audience to sustain them.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

<sup>4</sup> SHERPA/RoMEO, *New Theology Review*, <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/issn/0896-4297/>.

<sup>5</sup> DOAJ, *New Theology Review*, <https://doaj.org/toc/2169-1088>.

## ***Academic Libraries and Toxic Leadership***

**Alma C. Ortega. *Academic Libraries and Toxic Leadership*. Cambridge, MA: Chandos Publishing, 2017. 98 pp. \$54.51. Paperback. ISBN: 9780081006375.**

---

Alma C. Ortega (University of San Diego) highlights the underreported phenomenon of poor leadership in academic libraries that can infect an entire organization and demoralize library staff. Drawing upon a survey completed by 492 academic librarians and a semi-structured follow-up interview conducted with 54 of them, Ortega writes to help librarians identify problematic leadership and to help organizations heal after that leadership has been removed. She uses throughout the book the term “toxic leadership,” borrowed from the field of leadership studies, as a technical term for leadership situations characterized by “actions that cause considerable and long-lasting damage to individuals and the organization that often continue even after the perpetrator has left the organization” (6). The motivation for her work is this “considerable and long-lasting damage,” and so the book functions less as a guide for how to avoid and remove problematic leadership and more as a guide to identify such leadership and to work to heal organizations and librarians after these leaders are removed.

The book is organized into three sections. The first two chapters focus on definition. Drawing on the field of leadership studies and the scant literature on toxic leadership in academic libraries, Ortega highlights the danger for organizations and libraries that do not take seriously the threat of poor leadership and the danger for individual librarians who fail to communicate their negative experience with library leaders. Primary among these dangers is lowered morale and decreased productivity, which, in turn, negatively affect a library’s service for its users.

The second section of the book (chapters three through five) addresses ways of handling toxic leadership. Ortega’s advice is less focused on reporting and working toward removing bad leaders, though she does emphasize the importance of librarians’ documenting problematic behavior. Rather, she highlights the importance of librarians’ finding channels of communication, not only to make administration aware of the problem, but also to avoid the danger of librarians’ internalizing their frustrations. Her survey results document psychological and physical ill effects resulting from enduring toxic leadership. Ortega assumes that simply removing the toxic leader will not solve the library’s problem, and so in chapters four and five she explores strategies for healing after the problematic leader has been removed. She looks first at how an organization can heal, including the way the organization should give references for a toxic leader and better interview practices in seeking new leadership. Then she suggests personal strategies librarians should take to minimize the residual impact a removed toxic leader may have on a librarian’s career.

In the final chapter of the book, she turns from the hypothetical to the real, summarizing four different “case studies”: examples of toxic leadership built upon her interviews with fifty-four academic librarians. After each case, she offers a couple of general discussion questions, designed to help the reader translate the specifics of the case to his or her own situation.

Ortega’s highlighting the prevalence and characteristics of toxic leadership will be helpful to librarians and those in positions of library leadership. As she establishes in the first chapter, there is not a sufficient discussion of problematic leadership in the library literature, and so this work has value as the beginning of a conversation. Ortega offers a robust bibliography of leadership studies and academic librarianship literature that will benefit those reading their way into this field of study. She also writes clearly, balancing well her report of existing leadership literature with anecdotes and quotations from her interviews. She speaks with the voice of a practicing librarian, cognizant of practical situations such as family and geography that may demand librarians stay where they are, even under difficult leadership situations, while she is also aware of the bureaucratic inertia of institutions that often allows toxic situations to remain in place.

The book will be of most immediate help to those who work in large libraries, as Ortega does. The discussion throughout assumes a context of a large academic library (62.6 percent of her survey respondents work in university libraries), often

referring to layers of bureaucracy that will be involved in reporting and removing toxic leadership, as well as assuming the presence of many colleagues and a support infrastructure that may be unknown in small libraries at small institutions. For those who work in more isolated situations, further translation of her advice will be necessary. Perhaps of greatest value to both the librarian and the library administrator will be the four case studies, the mimetic function of which may help to identify toxicity in local situations.

Ortega's work highlights a topic that is not easy to talk about; few want to admit that they work or have worked under toxic leadership. And yet, Ortega's survey results, though by no means representative of academic librarians as a whole, do highlight the fact that toxicity is more common than the library leadership literature would suggest. Ortega's challenge in offering suggestions for handling this phenomenon is daunting because there can be no single set of steps that can remedy toxic situations. Each incident is embedded in its own context, as her four case studies clearly demonstrate. Therefore, Ortega's advice is ultimately generic, but it is so by necessity. She is to be applauded for starting this conversation, and librarians will benefit from reading the experiences of others as a lens to identify toxicity in their own current or past libraries and to become emboldened to do more than endure it silently.

Bo Adams  
Pitts Theology Library, Emory University  
Atlanta, GA

## ***An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek***

**G. K. Beale, Daniel J. Brendsel, and William A. Ross. *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Analysis of Prepositions, Adverbs, Particles, Relative Pronouns, and Conjunctions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. 96 pp. \$15.99. Paperback. ISBN: 9780310494119.**

I remember sitting in my first-semester Greek class twenty years ago when the professor turned ominously to the class and declared, “Today we start learning those *expletive* prepositions.” At the time, I laughed, partially because everyone else did, partially because he had literally said “expletive,” and partially because I got the idea that the next few lessons were going to be grueling. Over the next few semesters, I came to better understand his joke as I saw how much the argument of Greek texts hinged upon prepositions and other small, malleable words that we often take for granted. Those small words necessitate a narrowly focused book like *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek*.

The authors of *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* are well-qualified to write such a book. G. K. Beale is a respected New Testament scholar who holds the J. Gresham Machen chair of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary and is the author of fifteen books in his field. Daniel J. Brendsel holds a PhD. from Wheaton College and is the author of *“Isaiah Saw His Glory”: The Use of Isaiah 52–53 in John 12*. William A. Ross is a doctoral candidate at Cambridge University whose doctoral work focuses on lexical semantics in the Septuagint.

*An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* is a quick-and-dirty reference work. It is a small book — nearly pamphlet sized — designed to help translators of New Testament Greek understand how prepositions, adverbs, particles, relative pronouns, and conjunctions contribute to the logical flow of phrases in Greek texts. Like any lexicon, this work provides definitions for the included terms, but the strength of this work is that it also provides help for interpreting the logical and semantic relationships between clauses. A chart at the beginning of the book maps out the various possible logical relationships that the terms included in the book might indicate, and includes abbreviations used throughout the book as well as the abbreviations used on the website BibleArc.com. The book is heavily dependent upon four other standard Greek reference works — *BAGD*, *BDAG*, Daniel Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, and Murray J. Harris’s *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*. Each entry includes relevant information for the term included in each of these standard reference works. Consider it a companion to these other volumes rather than a replacement for them. The scope of this book is narrow and selective. *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* does not treat every preposition, article, adverb, conjunction, and relative pronoun in the Greek New Testament; rather, the authors focused on the most commonly occurring words.

*An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* is reminiscent of a couple of other small helpful tools designed to aid in translation — Sakae Kubo’s *A Reader’s Greek-English Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, and Maximilian Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor’s *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. Even though these types of works are largely derivative, they deserve consideration for the reference collection of any library that supports the teaching of New Testament Greek. If the teaching of Greek at your institution involves semantic diagramming, *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek* may be especially fitting for your collection. In addition, this work should pair especially well with electronic tools that allow users to trace the thought structure of the biblical text — tools like BibleWorks, Logos, Accordance, and BibleArc.com.

Jason Fowler  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Wake Forest, North Carolina

## *Cruising the Library*

**Melissa Adler. *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. 233 pp. \$100.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780823276363. \$28.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9780823276356.**

---

In the acknowledgments section of *Cruising the Library*, Melissa Adler eagerly awaits — as only a librarian can — her book's complete bibliographic record, and wonders where it will be shelved. For the author, this is more than a matter of personal interest; it's of academic interest, since library classification is more or less what this book is about: a technology of power, control, and dominance that hides and limits as well as reveals and enables. In other words, *Cruising the Library* problematizes library classification; it's thick with theory and criticism (critical theory) and thin with practical proposals (creative critique). Where the book will be shelved is of particular interest in light of the book's interdisciplinarity. The publisher has provided the following headings on the book's back cover: library and information science; gay and lesbian studies; and American studies. Adler examines library classification, namely, that of the Library of Congress, through the lens of gay and lesbian studies. It is a particularly illuminating lens, perhaps even more so than that of theology and religious studies, for the simple reason that its vocabulary has changed so much over the years.

*Cruising the Library* is a complex work divided into five substantial chapters. The first chapter takes a critical look at Library of Congress subject headings dealing with homosexuality. Adler describes how she was searching for catalog records with the word "homosexual" in them. As she browsed through the results, she came across Wilhelm Stekel's 1934 book *Bi-Sexual Love: The Homosexual Neurosis*, which was marked with the headings "Neuroses" and "Paraphilias." The neutral, medical term *paraphilia* had replaced "Sexual deviation" in 2007, which had replaced "Sexual perversion" in 1972. When the book was originally cataloged in 1934, headings for "Homosexuality" and "Bisexuality" didn't exist, and they were never retrospectively applied to Stekel's book. This is problematic, according to Adler, primarily because medical terms have been applied to a wide variety of works that use quite different words. It is particularly problematic because the warrant for subject headings is supposed to come from the literature itself, as the Library of Congress urges and acknowledges.

Chapter two is quite a different investigation, one that tells the fascinating and obscure history of the Library of Congress's Delta Collection. This locked, closed-to-the-public collection of books, films, and ephemera with explicitly sexual or pornographic content and/or illustrations had accumulated over a period of decades as an attempt to police and protect public morals, as well as protect the items themselves from theft and vandalism. Many were seized by U.S. Customs and postal officials, or acquired by the Copyright Office. Although the collection was disbanded in the 1960s, Adler has been able to identify 1,010 books that once belonged to it, including *Erotic Prints of the Ming* and Nabokov's *Lolita*. Her archival research has also unearthed the rather paranoid atmosphere at LC that prevailed in the 1950s, when more than a dozen Library of Congress employees were charged with perversion.

The next two chapters focus on Library of Congress classification schemes, how they affect the physical location of books in the library building, and how those books relate to one another. For example, Adler's paradigmatic author Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's diverse output is spread across the following subject classifications: BF (Psychology), P (Philology and Linguistics), PN (Literature) PR (English literature), PS (American literature), and RC (Internal medicine). Most of these books have something to do with queer theory, which actually falls under HQ (Family, Marriage, and Women). In the academic library where Adler works, these books have been shelved on three different floors, so it is easy to see how a reader interested in Sedgwick's books might be frustrated trying to locate them all. If the reader were to go searching in the HQs, s/he might be shocked and/or dismayed to see books on homosexuality shelved with books on sex crimes. Updating the names of subject headings, as the Library of Congress has done, simply isn't enough if the classifications remain the same. What happens if race is factored into the equation? Here Adler notes that the majority of



books categorized as being about “African American gays” are classified according to sexual difference rather than racial difference.

Since one book obviously can't be shelved in two places at once, other considerations come into play, and this is where accusations of bias come in, since one aspect of a subject invariably gets privileged over another, and dominant groups are considered normative. Why, for example, are there subject headings for “African American gays,” “Asian American gays,” and “Hispanic American gays,” but not for “White gays”? There is no easy solution, but Adler offers a few “reparative taxonomies” in the final chapter. Unfortunately, these function more as imaginative exercises than as practical proposals, leaving us right where we started, though perhaps somewhat wiser and a lot more critical. Adler's critical analysis of taxonomies could certainly be extended to the disciplines of theology and religious studies, where Christian discourses dominate, with no less lurid and shameful results.

For a book that owes so much to critical theory (Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, to name a few), *Cruising the Library* is remarkably readable, despite a fair amount of jargon. This becomes most noticeable when Adler quotes others, because the quotes contrast so unfavorably with her limpid prose. The reader doesn't even need to be familiar with critical theory or interested in queer studies to find this book fascinating. But for those who are in the business of bibliographic cataloging and reference, this critical study is essential reading.

Barnaby Hughes  
ATLA  
Chicago, IL

## *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*

**Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 540 pp. \$160. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780199755653.**

---

Sankofa, a word from the Akan tribe in Ghana, is an influential philosophical concept from the African Diaspora that has been used to characterize elements of African American life. The symbol is based on a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward with its head turned backwards. The literal translation of the word for the symbol is “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.”

Evoking the consciousness of returning to one’s past, *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* provides a survey of the academic content of black theology and its impact on the study of religion in the United States. As stated in the introduction, the volume is intended as a “self-evaluation and internal critique that lays out its structure, content, and logic with an eye towards its future” (5). Ethicist and womanist scholar Katie Cannon (Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education) and humanist and religious scholar Anthony Pinn (Rice University) invite to the table a communion of the foremost contemporary scholars of African American theology to examine the interdisciplinary nature of African American theology and critically engage major topics and development of the theological tradition including eschatology, soteriology, Christology, womanist theology, biblical hermeneutics, and ethics.

*The Handbook* contains thirty-four essays organized thematically into five sections. Section I, “Sources,” provides a framework for the development of African American theology, beginning with an examination of African American history as a crucial source for the discipline. A shared construction of black identity and historical trends in black thought and politics informs the development of African American theology, which authors attribute primarily to James Cone, an African Methodist Episcopal minister, professor, and author of the groundbreaking work *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969). Essays on reason, theoretical commitments, and methodologies in African American theology provide an understanding of the material of black theology and its rootedness in culture and history. In “African American Religious Experience,” M. Shawn Copeland problematizes the formation of African American religious experience and notes that the formation and practice of African American religion is based on a common experience and narrative of oppression. Terrence L. Johnson’s essay on reason emphasizes the limits of theodicy and demonstrates how blackness can expand reason into an emancipatory way of justifying human agency and “transgressing the boundaries of traditions and narratives” (107). This section also analyzes the problems of the construction of black identity as a response to white supremacy, which, Stephen C. Finley notes, “ignores the complexity and fluidity constituting African American lives” (22).

Discussions of doctrine in African American theology focus the essays in Section II of the volume. Keri Day provides an analysis of the four major camps that comprise the doctrines of God in African American theology, including Christian personalism, black liberation and womanist theologies, atheistic humanism, and pragmatic reconstructions of African American theology. Through analysis of the major categories and concerns of theological discourse, essays in this section cover how the nature of Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity, salvation, and creation function epistemologically and point to fundamental convictions that influence and encourage a fully articulated black theology of liberation that contextualizes oppression, liberation, justice, and God’s action in the world on behalf of African Americans. R. Drew Smith’s essay on “The Church in African American Theology” illuminates the social history of the church and its function as a place of spiritual development and refuge while also offering critiques of the interpretation of scripture, participation in social activism, sexism, and heterosexism in Black church cultural space.

Section III, “Internal Debates,” summarizes significant developments within African American theology. As a whole, these essays engage in deep reflection and scholarly inquiry about the checks and balances within African American

theology, including attention to audience and pedagogy. Topics covered include women's knowledge and embodiment in womanism; the assumption of theism, Christocentrism, and humanism; diasporic dialogue; and pluralistic faith traditions. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan's historiography of womanist theology as both a corrective discipline and mode of black theologizing launches a six-essay interrogation of the precarious cultural narratives that motivated an expansion of African American theology in the 1980s with the increased influence of black liberation and womanist theologies at progressive Christian seminaries and divinity schools. Postmodern thought attends to the continued relevance of a contemporary theology that is inclusive and responsible for community as Dennis Wiley succinctly describes in his essay "Audiences of Accountability in African American Theology."

In "Ongoing Challenges," Section IV, the cultural context that grounds African American theology resurfaces as a challenge to articulate a distinctly African American way of doing God-talk and realizing historical agency. Victor Anderson challenges contemporary African American theology "to imagine, articulate, cultivate, and reproduce the conditions of possibility for this plenitude of being within religious and morally situated moments of black existential hope" (394). Six essays cover the various aspects of early African American theology and analyze how Africa and African-ness figure into the self-description of African American theology. Lewis R. Gordon illustrates the complexity of the history of religions and African identity and highlights the paradox that African Americans are "inside outsides of the modern world" (373). Additional questions about the positioning of African American theology in modernity are raised by Anthony G. Reddie as he identifies how black and womanist theologies can engage and critique the global economy.

The volume concludes with a trifecta of articles concerning "Prospects for the Future" in Section V. The essays in this section ask questions of religious organization and cultural production in African American theologizing. Jonathan L. Walton documents the black spiritual movement from New Orleans to Azusa Street in his essay on the growth of the prosperity gospel and its effect on African American theology. William James Jennings invites scholars to engage in a practice of routine reflection on the character of a black public consciousness and its potential consequences for communal culture and how it contributes to the wider ecclesial and social ethos in which African American theology operates. Emilie Townes imagines a future trajectory for African American theology and closes the volume by calling upon the discipline's capacity to validate black culture as a primary source and "foundation for exploring the religious worldviews of black folk in the United States and beyond" (487).

*The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* accomplishes the editors' objective of providing detailed description, analysis, and constructive discussions concerning African American theology for scholars and advanced students. A reader with a casual interest in the subject could also benefit from this approachable reference aid. The contributors exemplify the ecumenical, interdisciplinary nature of African American theology with the inclusion of perspectives of Protestant and Catholic writers, as well as perspectives from non-Christian religions, African spiritualities, and non-theistic orientations. Essays follow a repetitive multi-point paragraph structure that aids understanding and offers continuity.

Though most scholars begin with an overview of how their topic is connected to the evolution of responses to James Cone's definitive *Black Theology* and subsequent scholars, the volume would benefit from a timeline or chronological graphic highlighting the major movements and scholars in African American theology. In support of collection development, each essay concludes with selected texts that would constitute a well-rounded library of the key topics. In addition to these texts, the handbook's final section on "Prospects for the Future" could be bolstered with an exploration of relevant contemporary issues such as the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Flint water crisis, and the Dakota Access Pipeline. Other works to put in conversation with *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* include *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II; *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* by Drew G. I. Hart; *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* by Kelly Brown Douglas; *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community* by Leah Gunning Francis; and *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

Shaneé Yvette Murrain  
University of West Georgia  
Carrollton, Georgia

## Reading for Faith and Learning

**John B. Weaver and Douglas L. Gragg, eds. *Reading for Faith and Learning: Essays on Scripture, Community, & Libraries in Honor of M. Patrick Graham*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2017. 326 pp. \$50.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9780891124290.**

---

Sometimes the collected essays in a *Festschrift*, to borrow a line from the movie *Forrest Gump*, resemble a box of chocolates — you never know what you are going to get. In the case of *Reading for Faith and Learning*, which was edited by librarians John B. Weaver and Douglas L. Gragg, one finds a rich and varied assortment of nineteen essays. The contributors include colleagues and friends of our esteemed associate M. Patrick (Pat) Graham, Director of the Pitts Theological Library at Emory University, whose career is honored with this volume. These authors represent a variety of disciplines including library and information science, preaching, church history, Hebrew Bible, religious education, and others.

Perhaps reflecting the diversity of contributors, the essays encompass an amazingly wide array of genres. For example, there are traditional exegetical studies, a translation of a sixteenth-century treatise, a commentary on a third-century CE letter, an essay that reads a bit like popular business literature, and a piece that has the flavor of a bibliographic essay.

Despite the breadth of the materials in the volume, Weaver and Gragg have done a masterful job of creating a well-structured tome. They chose to organize the essays into three distinct sections: “Reading the Bible,” “Reading in Community,” and “Reading and the Library,” which contain six, seven, and six articles, respectively. These sections correspond to three emphases of Pat Graham’s own vocation as a Hebrew Biblical scholar, a minister in the Churches of Christ, and a leading theological librarian.

Most remarkably, while the sections of the book appeal to three distinct academic audiences, a reader will be richly rewarded by absorbing the entire text from cover to cover. Each article has been carefully placed so that not only are the common themes of reading and learning highlighted, but also so that each essay serves as a stepping stone to the next. In the first section, for instance, Carol Newsom’s study of several Bible pericopes that highlight reading includes the story of Josiah’s interaction with a scroll. As a result, her article introduces Brent A. Strawn’s fuller exposition of 2 Kings 22-23. For his part Strawn describes his method as theological and hermeneutical (33-34), which opens the way to read the three essays that follow as a sampler of interpretive techniques. They include Steven McKenzie’s text critical study of Jezebel in the books of Kings, Carisse Mickey Berryhill’s literary-critical treatment of Ruth, and Joel M. LeMon’s reading of the troublesome Psalm 137:9 from the vantage of reception history. This section of the *Festschrift* closes with Armin Siedlecki’s English translation of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt’s “The Books that are Biblical.” The sixteenth-century author makes recommendations to Reformation-era printers about the appropriate canon for Protestant editions of the Bible. This treatise serves as a bridge to the next section.

Indeed, the first chapter in “Reading in Community” is John Witte, Jr.’s study of the youth catechism written by Karlstadt’s contemporary, John Calvin. In turn, the discussion of Calvin’s attempt to write material accessible to lay and youth audiences forms the perfect segue to E. Brooks Holifield’s study of the book trade. Holifield focuses on the various markets for religious publications in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. Weaver and Gragg continue the chronological sequencing with Kathy Pulley’s review of several twentieth-century feminist publications that are useful for pondering the role of women in Churches of Christ congregations. Her questions about women in the pulpit provide a connection to the next chapter, in which Thomas G. Long asks how preachers might read the biblical text faithfully. He proposes drawing out parallels between individual characters in biblical stories and the lives of those in the pews.

At this point the focus within the “Reading in Community” section of the volume shifts from those who disseminate religious information, either by publishing or preaching it, to a series of three essays that draw attention to readers of

texts and the formative aspects of written words. Carson E. Reed explores how narrative history and the Christian story help us to form community, Richard T. Hughes reminisces about a course he once taught at Messiah College on memoirs that made a lasting impact on students, and Tracy Powell Iwaskow, a freelance librarian, asserts that one of the tasks of library communities is to cultivate love.

The third and final section of the book, “Reading and the Library,” follows quite naturally on the heels of Iwaskow’s contribution. All of the articles in this last section save the initial one, in which New Testament scholar Richard A. Wright takes on the question of how books were preserved and stored in the late second century CE, were written by librarians. Richard Manly Adams, Jr. and Donald G. Davis, Jr., who co-writes with Jon Arvid Aho, remain immersed in the era of the Roman Empire. The first writes on Lucian Samosata’s caustic observations about dilettante book collectors, while the later pair comment on a late-third-century letter by Theonas, Bishop of Alexandria. For his part, Jack Ammerman turns the discussion from the ancient world to the fast-paced, digitally super-saturated, hyper-reading climate of the information age. His is the only article to employ data mining techniques and includes two charts. David Stewart contributes the final chapter, writing about how librarians are aptly suited to assisting in the vocational formation and guidance of students.

All of the essays are sweet treats, but four will have a larger readership than others. The first is McKenzie’s work on Jezebel. McKenzie’s conclusion that all of the Hebrew Bible passages in which the villainess appears have been strongly affected by later editorial activity has implications not only for text critics but also feminist scholars. He offers a persuasive challenge to the received view that her negative characterization is due to the Deuteronomistic historian.

Two other contributions, one by Hughes and the one by Holifield, have the potential to become standard reading for junior faculty members or even doctoral students who are looking to learn about teaching and publishing. Hughes provides an anecdote about an experience teaching in which he and his co-teacher spouse sought to guide students from surface readings of texts to deeper meaning without imposing their own will on learners. He details how students were encouraged to make independent discoveries and engage in critical thinking about texts that reflected religious traditions different from the students’ own.

Holifield, by contrast, offers a concise history of religious publication. It details how religious presses come and go, genres burst into fashion or disappear into obscurity, and other subjects come to dominate public discourse. Along the way, he addresses the relationship of public notoriety to prolific publication.

Finally, Richard A. Wright centers his essay on a treatise written by Galen that was just discovered in 2005. The fact that this document so recently surfaced means this piece will be of immediate interest not only to librarians and biblical textual critics but also to classicists.

The last entry in *Reading for Faith and Learning* is a selected listing of Pat Graham’s published books, articles, presentations, and book reviews. Compiled by Craig Churchill, it forms a fitting *inclusio* with the photograph of Pat that graces the front piece. The cover design and layout of the book honor Pat, too. Pat was an innovator in providing digital open access images and the cover design makes use of a graphic from the Pitts Library collection.

A delightful book, it has only a few minor weaknesses. For instance, while there is an attractive page border to mark the start of each article, chapter numbers were omitted. Therefore, it is difficult to locate particular essays when flipping through the text. In addition, the book includes a combined person, scripture, and subject index, but much material is missing. For example, there is no reference to Paul Griffiths (225) or Acts 2:24 (45). Perhaps separate indexes might have proven more useful. Finally, the absence of a comprehensive bibliography leaves readers to focus on the footnotes to access the broader scholarly conversations represented by the research presented in the articles.

Speaking of footnotes, it is very interesting to observe that of the 582 footnotes in the volume, only 29, or slightly less than 5 percent, refer to an electronic-only resource that is identified with a URL. Further, of those 29 notes, 24 of them (82 percent) occur in the last section of the book — the section dedicated to librarianship. As a result, like any excellent and highly recommended work, *Reading for Faith and Learning* raises as many questions as it answers about how readers



read, the role reading plays in religious research, and whether or not librarians are more optimistic about the pace of the adoption of digital resources and content by religion scholars than is currently demonstrated in those scholars' published work.

Congratulations, Pat, on your retirement.

Beth M. Sheppard  
Library Director  
Duke Divinity School Library  
Durham, NC