INTEREST GROUP MEETINGS

Public Services

David Schmersal, Interest Group Chair

ATTENDEES

- David Schmersal, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Chair
- Melody Diehl Detar, Duquesne University
- Jane Elder, Southern Methodist University
- Kaeley McMahan, Wake Forest University, Steering Committee Member
- Steve Perisho, Seattle Pacific University
- Desirae Zingarelli-Sweet, Loyola Marymount University

Six members of the Public Services Interest Group met for an informal conversation and breakfast. Gerrit VanDyk (co-chair) was unable to attend the conference. After brief introductions and noting that our group was sponsoring a session at the conference (Beauty, Embodiment, and Stewardship: Theological Libraries and Theological Ecology, scheduled for 10:30am on Saturday, June 13), the group devoted most of our time discussing our group's plans and ideas for the new iteration of *Websites on Religion* as a LibGuide: https://atla.libguides.com/.

As discussed at our business meeting, the Public Services Interest Group has been charged with overseeing and maintaining the new iteration of *Websites on Religion* as a LibGuide. As noted on the Atla

website (https://www.atla.com/learning-engagement/resources-for-librarianship/websites-on-religion/):

- *Websites on Religion* is a selective, annotated collection of web resources for the study of religion. Please note, this database of resources has not been consistently maintained since 2014. Atla took ownership of the site from the Wabash Center in 2018 and will begin work on updating the links in late 2019.

- This resource site was launched by the Wabash Center in the 1990s through the dedicated efforts of Charles Bellinger. It was officially named "The Guide to Internet Resources for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion" and was also referred to as "The Internet Guide."

- When the Wabash Center realized that the scope and purposes of the site fit better with trained librarians than with the Wabash Center's mission to support critical reflection on teaching practices, Atla was pleased to take over the site in 2018.

David and Gerrit had a video conference meeting with Christine Fruin in the autumn of 2018 to discuss the PSIG's interest in fostering the transition to LibGuide format and coordinate updating the links. Atla staff subsequently decided to separate the tasks, recruiting Atla members to move the content of the current site and asking PSIG members to oversee the content once the conversion to a LibGuide has been completed.

At the meeting and in email correspondence, the group has discussed how to go about this, while recognizing that before making any detailed plans it would be best to see how the LibGuide is structured and then collaborate among members of PSIG to determine whether we will want to revise the structure somewhat.

Broadly speaking, we have agreed that, rather than considering this an index of every website on religion (which Google can sort-of provide), it would be more useful to craft a carefully curated list of a few, select free online resources arranged topically, and that it would be best for a few members of the group to each take responsibility for a broad area, and recruit others to assist with curation as may be

helpful. While such selection will necessarily be subjective, we have identified the following criteria to guide our judgment:

a.   Websites that are sponsored by/affiliated with an academic institution or maintained by a faculty member at an intuition (e.g., "Assisting You to Learn")

b.   Official, organizational websites of various religious groups or denominations or historical societies

c.   Websites that provide (legal) online access to relevant primary sources and to tools that help patrons make use of such sources, such as lexica, e.g., Perseus Project, CCEL, hymnary.org)

d.   Websites that provide access to a variety of texts that reflect various perspectives (vs. websites that seek to promote a single point of view)

e.   Websites that are regularly maintained and updated

f.   Websites that we have personally used and found helpful (e.g., STEP Bible)

The group plans to meet virtually and collaborate over email to make more definite and detailed plans once the LibGuide has been completed, which is projected to be in the fall of 2019.