
Presbyterian and Reformed

*Virginia Dearborn, Princeton Theological Seminary, Secretary
Sharon Taylor, Shadyside Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, PA)*

MEMBERS PRESENT

- James Pakala, Covenant Theological Seminary, Convener
- Margaret Alkema, Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
- Anita Coleman, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- Steve Crocco, Yale University
- Virginia Dearborn, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Michael Farrell, Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando, FL)
- Leslie Fuller, Southern Methodist University
- Becky Givens, Covenant Theological Seminary
- Ed Hughes, Memphis Theological Seminary
- Steve Jamieson, Covenant Theological Seminary
- Denise Pakala, Covenant Theological Seminary
- Christopher Richardson, Union Presbyterian Seminary
- David Schmersal, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- John Shaffett, Shorter University
- Sharon Taylor, Shadyside Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, PA)

SUMMARY

Christopher Richardson began our meeting by introducing himself and inviting each of us to introduce ourselves and put our names, institutions, and email addresses in the Zoom chat. Christopher then led the group in a discussion of possible projects that we could undertake as a group. He then led us into discussion of what has been happening at our respective institutions.

Events of the past year have been somewhat overtaken by COVID-19 as, in March 2020, our schools and libraries had to close and/or move online very quickly. Many of our institutions had little or no distance learning present in the curriculum prior to the onset of the pandemic. A few of our libraries were in the midst of renovation or building projects in March and had (fortunately) been purchasing

more e-books than in previous years. A few institutions were just finishing their accreditations when the lockdowns started.

Some libraries are scanning materials for use outside the library, while others are beginning to offer some curbside pick-up or limited access to physical space within their buildings. Some library staff are working from home, others in the library, and some are being required to work on campus but “socially distanced” in another campus building. Most schools seem to be leaning towards a hybrid model for the fall—online and modified in-person teaching.

Some institutions (and therefore libraries) are under a hiring freeze while others are able to post and attempt to fill open positions. Sharon Taylor, retired librarian, reported that she’s been leading book studies for Shadyside Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, PA) from the church library via Zoom this year.

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Stitt Library

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, this has been a year of significant change for Stitt Library and Austin Seminary. In December, a week before the seminary closed for the holiday break, we learned that our office of institutional advancement had secured all the funds necessary to proceed with our planned renovation, setting in motion a flurry of activity. In subsequent weeks, we moved about half our reference collection into our temporary quarters—a former student lounge in another building on campus—and then worked with a moving company to transfer about 6000 previously selected volumes from our circulating collection onto library shelves we had cleared and set up in an underutilized racquetball court while the remaining 84,000 volumes are in storage and remain inaccessible. The building project itself is projected to last about two years and has two parts: (1) renovating the existing 1950s half of the building, and (2) tearing down the 1970s half and building a new structure on the same footprint but one story higher. The emphasis in the renovated building is on additional individual and group study space with good lighting and plenty of electrical outlets. In anticipation of this, we had been aggressively purchasing e-books and other electronic resources and thus have found ourselves uniquely and mercifully well prepared for the changes brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak. Staff are

currently working almost entirely remotely, fulfilling requests for scans on an ad hoc basis. Our plans for gradually reopening consist of stages tied to a decrease in the number of cases, which, at the time of writing this, sadly, has been moving in the wrong direction. We thus anticipate supporting students and faculty virtually and remotely for much of the fall semester.

Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

CRTS is a small seminary with less than 30 students. We have just completed an ATS reaffirmation of accreditation visit in March. It ended up being a Zoom visit at the last minute. I was the coordinator of the self-study, so I didn't have as much time to focus on the library in the past year as I wanted to. During the ATS visit we also switched to Zoom for classes. Since then, we are rethinking our fall semester, and I have been involved with that as well. We kept the library open for appointments and are doing curbside for guest borrowers. Two years ago, we joined the Digital Theological Library, and that was a huge boon for us during the improvised distance education portion of our spring semester. We are also in the middle of a library redecorating project. There is no lack of work to do!

Covenant Theological Seminary

At Covenant Theological Seminary, the position of library director is changing, as of July 1, from Jim Pakala to Steve Jamieson, who has worked at the Library for sixteen years and is associate librarian for public services. A new position of collection development librarian involved a search this spring that went well but, for various reasons, is now being renewed. Besides some volunteer service to the Seminary going forward, Jim will help train the new person when the position is filled. The Pakalas began serving at Covenant in August 1991, after years at Philadelphia area seminaries. Denise retired June 30, 2019, but works on an essentially volunteer basis several hours per week, one project being the cataloguing of Bibles in many languages donated by a collector. The Seminary is seeking a new president and has engaged a firm that has assisted other schools. With social spacing and other pandemic-related measures, classroom use is to resume for the fall semester, but reliance on hybrid and online courses will be even more significant as well. Fall break will not occur, but the term is to conclude just before Thanksgiving.

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Greetings from E. M. White Library, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary! I thought it may be more of a fun and interesting read if I included some pictures, starting with my taking up of my new job on Epiphany Day, 6 January, 2020. Matthew Collins, the previous library director, left in mid-2019. I accepted the call to serve at LPTS in October 2019. Enjoy!

January 2020

My official photo for Louisville Seminary was taken and I settled into my office, made welcoming by a quilt from my mother-in-law and tulips, daffodils, orchids, and more from Louisville friends. After twenty-five years in Southern California and having grown up in south India, I was full of excitement about living on a seminary campus, participating in a beloved community life in winter lands, and experiencing daily life in snow. On January 9, I discovered “feasting Friends”—a Presbyterian group—are on campus. I took a quick video of them after worship to share with their friends. Soon DMin and other students arrived on campus for J-Term. My January 16 diary entry conveys some of my excitement:

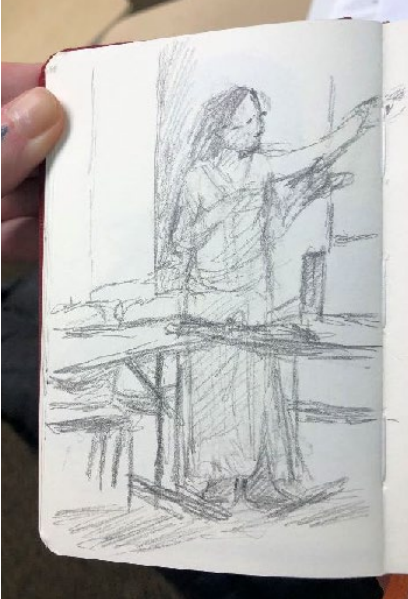


Today, temperature was in the forties, with slight winds. Weather prediction was a cloudy day but I brought the sun with me! Who came out early bathing our campus in glorious golden light. Anyway, my high point today came ~ 2 pm. I participated in worship led by students in a 2-week all-day J-Term intensive course, The Art of Presence: Creative Worship for the People of God, taught by Mark and Cheryl Goodman-Morris. I took a few videos of the brief worship. It starts with a few moments with Cheryl and Mark, who explained what I was going to be a part of. Enjoy! Did I worship? Yes.

In January, I visited three of the local members of our consortium, which is called Metroversity Library Directors: Bellarmine University, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and University of Louisville.

February 2020

Before the Spring semester began, we took a field trip to Fort Knox! Bobi Bilz, admin coordinator, and Angela Morris and Angeles Ankrum, two of the professional librarians on staff, and I visited



Barr Memorial Library, Fort Knox, Kentucky—an award-winning library. Bobi’s husband, Michael Steinmacher, is the director of Barr Memorial Library, and we learned a lot about events! I began co-teaching Research Methods and Practices with Prof. Sue Garrett (OT professor). I created the information research toolbox. Here’s a sketch of me in class by Ken Schuck (MDiv ’23). Research Methods and Practices is a new course, and this is the first semester it is being taught. We had a student enrollment of fifteen. A three-credit course, this is a required course for the

Master of Arts in Religion degree and will be taught by me every spring. We planned a library open house for PC(USA), PMA, PW, and other friends in Louisville for the end of March that had to be cancelled.

March 2020

SAC COC (re-accrediting commission) site visit on the sixth went very well. Our quality enhancement plan focus on anti-racism was approved. In anticipation, in March, we had also launched an anti-racism display as a permanent feature in the library. This will be a rotating collection of books and other learning resources, including digital and museum media, drawing from the research, scholarship, and creativity of our library collections. Each display will highlight one or more of the facets of anti-racism, such as actions, practices, beliefs, values, doctrines, policies, people, movements, and organizations. The goal of the display is to move us beyond the current racial imagination into a theological one that transforms us into integrative anti-racists: lifelong learners, tending and thriving in the “whosoever” call of Louisville Seminary. The physical anti-racism display is supplemented by an online resource, the Anti-racism Digital Library. I invite you to visit endracism.info or to read [my article in the spring 2020 issue of Theological Librarianship](#) about using the ADL to teach information literacy.

April–June 2020

In mid-March, faculty made the historic decision, like so many others amid COVID-19, to move all instruction online. The library has been super busy supporting this and working almost 24/7. I reframed it as a “new purpose” for librarians, evoking the Depression-era bookmobiles—Kentucky horse librarians. While the library building and our physical print collections closed, the librarians and our student workers worked from home to deliver digital library services in ways we had not been doing before. We started with a blog about digital library services—With Much Love—that is now being redesigned as our new library portal. We also started an online help desk.

We saw students hanging out in social media and began to reach them there as well. We celebrated National Library Week with contests. We created guides for exegesis assignments. Our student library workers helped us to create and pilot YouTube videos, infographics, and more! On-campus operations at the seminary are now expected to re-open on August 3. All courses will, however, be offered online only. Accordingly, the library is preparing fully online course reserves. We are exploring safe re-opening but will use a phased approach for requested services, such as print book delivery and book scanning, in accordance with public health and Seminary guidelines. We are planning a robust library instruction program for fall, starting with a fully online orientation for new students on August 31. We plan to include incoming and ongoing assessment of information and research competencies. We are continuing to create instructional guides in diverse formats and to prepare course-integrated guides. We will offer a calendar and slate of requestable, course-integrated, and customized workshops. Some new services have been added to the library: online learning and institutional research board duties. As part of our new blog, we got G Suite for Higher Education for faculty to pilot. G Suite/Classroom has now emerged as one of the academic delivery tools for fall. We are system administrators and online learning support and will help our dean lead campus to choose a new LMS in the fall for online learning beyond 2020.

Personnel

- Angela Morris retired in July.
- Anita Coleman is the library director since January.
- Debra Mumford is the new academic dean since July.

- Two professional librarian positions are open and we are looking to fill them as soon as possible.

Collections and Services

Our collections are at ~195,000 resources in print, microform, and other formats. 1200 items were added to the library collection (i.e., cataloged and processed) for fiscal year 2019–20. We stopped ordering print books in March and have only received standing orders in print since then. The library's print periodicals have been drastically reduced to 211, with ~12,000 in electronic subscriptions. Our electronic collections use and support for emerging technologies on campus, like a modern learning management system, are increasing! Besides delivering services remotely, library staff have also been upskilling and working in teams. Our community has been most supportive of us during this time.

Princeton Theological Seminary

The Princeton Theological Seminary Library (PTSL) recently implemented Innovative Interfaces, Inc.'s Sierra integrated library system. PTSL is employing WebPAC for its more traditional catalog functionality and continuing to use Summon as its discovery tool. ILS additions include Syndetics Unbound, mobile access, and integration with campus single sign-on. Prior to ILS migration, PTSL implemented OpenAthens to replace EZProxy for managing authenticated user access to e-resources and set up LEAN Library to help users encounter library resources more easily from non-library websites.

On March 20th, Princeton Seminary went into partial closure, its library building closed, and staff transitioned to remote work environments. During this time, the library has continued to offer a variety of services to its community, primarily through virtual reference, chat service and electronic resources. A commitment has been made to acquire greater amounts of electronic resources at this time and moving forward, including increasing the number of PTS collection items in Internet Archive's controlled digital lending program. Additional library services are being reintroduced in stages as new protocols are developed. In April and May, the library made it possible for graduating students to return their books. This service was subsequently expanded to all patrons. In June, curbside book pickup service for PTS faculty and PhD students was implemented, and the front of the library was opened for quiet study space.

During the pandemic, courses have transitioned to an online environment until the health situation allows for transition back to onsite teaching and learning. Students are returning to campus in the fall with carefully planned programs to allow for socially distanced community, team, and class activities if/when the health situation allows.

The library was pleased to welcome Sarah Danser as its new Serials and Cataloging Librarian in April. With the transition of a number of staff to retirement in 2019, the library hopes to fill several vacant positions in the coming academic year.

Union Presbyterian Seminary

- Union Presbyterian Seminary (UPSem) has decided to hold all summer and fall classes online.
- Throughout the summer, our library locations in Richmond and Charlotte will be closed to the public but offering a twice/day weekday pickup service for physical checkouts (for all library users) and library building usage by appointment for UPSem students, faculty, staff—to allow us to control the number of people in the building. Unless things worsen, we plan to offer more appointment slots in the fall, though still for UPSem users.
- We are applying for distance education (over 50%) from SACSCOC now, partially to enable online classes after December, if necessary.
- We are heavily involved in preparing for reaffirmation by SACSCOC and ATS over the next couple of years (class of 2022).
- We are in the process of hiring a new reference librarian. Our current reference and archives librarian, Dr. Paula Skreslet, will retire at the end of August. We will begin interviewing candidates for that next week, and another staff librarian (Ryan Douthat) will be taking over Paula's work in our archives and special collections, including digitization projects.