# Professional Development

*Michael Bradford, Harvard University, Chair*

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Michael Bradford, Harvard, Chair
- Karen Clarke, Pacific Rim Christian University
- Rebecca Givens, Covenant Theological Seminary
- Justin Lillard, Harding University
- Andy Lofthus, Western Seminary
- Warren Watson, Payne Theological Seminary
- Christine Wenderoth, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Patricia Yang, Gateway Seminary
- Gillian Harrison Cain, Staff Liaison

## YEAR IN REVIEW

The Professional Development Committee (PDC) fosters the development of librarians and related information professionals who serve theological and religious studies scholarship and study. By determining member needs, identifying expert resources, and utilizing a variety of methods and delivery mechanisms, we provide professional development opportunities to the membership that facilitate the exchange of ideas and support members at every point in their careers.

In October 2019, the PDC held its annual in-person fall meeting in Denver, Colorado. One of the major topics that was discussed was aligning our committee's administrative calendar with that of the Association. We also brainstormed programming ideas, reviewed our committee's charge, and planned for a spring membership needs survey.

In January and February 2020, the PDC conducted a member needs professional development survey. We began analyzing our survey data in March, just as COVID-19 was affecting libraries and library staffs across the country, so we decided to re-survey a few key questions to compare them with pre-COVID-19 responses. The key takeaway was that a majority of respondents (81%) identified webinars as their first

choice of how to receive their professional development from Atla. You can read our full survey report, including analysis, on the Atla blog.

As to webinars, over the last few years, the PDC has worked with Member Programs to establish an infrastructure for developing and promoting webinar programs and utilizing technical platforms already in place with the Association. Other committees have taken advantage of these services in order to present their own programming. The majority of webinars are recorded and available for on-demand viewing after the program has been completed.

During FY2020, the PDC itself identified and recruited presenters for a handful of webinars that were all well attended, but one was by far a stand-out, since it was not only advertised to the Atla membership but also shared to at least one ALA listserv. This early-March webinar by Leslie Engelson and Christina Torbert, entitled "Telling Your Story: Articulating Your Value as a Technical Services Librarian," maxed out Atla's allotted attendance slots and we had folks who were waitlisted and unable to attend the live program. All attendees, including those on the waitlist, were given a link to the program recording afterwards. The success of this program demonstrates the significant interest in these topics, as well as the potential audience for Atla-curated content among a larger group.

The PDC also reviews applications and awards regional grants for programming by regional groups and institutions. During FY2020, the PDC did not receive any applications for these grants, despite extensive outreach efforts by the committee. Many groups hold their meetings in the spring and we can only surmise that, due to COVID-19, meetings either went virtual or were altogether cancelled, thus not necessitating grant support by the PDC.

As the Atla Annual in-person conference was re-imagined from an in-person event in Detroit, Michigan, to an online event, the PDC's members played a role in the online conference by volunteering to be session hosts, where they introduced presenters, facilitated questions in the room chat, and made sure the sessions ended on time.

This last year has been truly unprecedented. As we begin a new academic year, where the membership continues to work remotely, return to their libraries, or a blend of the two, the Professional Development Committee will focus on fostering programming that will meet your professional development needs during these unique times.