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# Public Services

*David Schmersal, Wright Learning and Information Center, Austin  
Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Secretary*

## **MEMBERS PRESENT**

- Allison Graham, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Virginia Dearborn, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Dee Roberts, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University
- Susanne Ridenour, Knott Library, St. Mary's Seminary and University

## **ABSENTEE MEMBERS**

- (208 others)

## **AGENDA**

- 1) Welcome new members and briefly describe the nature and scope of the interest group
- 2) Debrief 2024 Atla annual conference, specifically the session sponsored by PSIG
- 3) Propose and discuss ideas for a session at the 2025 Atla annual conference
- 4) Custodianship of Atla's Websites on Religion Libguide
- 5) Check-in/round robin

## **YEAR IN REVIEW**

Members of the PSIG planned and sponsored a session offered as a panel presentation at the 2024 Atla Annual Conference entitled "How Doomed Are We?: A Philosophical/Theological Consideration of AI/ChatGPT in Relation to Theological Libraries and Theological Education." The presenters were:

Allison Graham, Reference and Research Librarian, Princeton Theological Seminary

Brady Alan Beard, Ph.D., Reference and Instruction Librarian, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Emily Peterson, Director of Public Services, John Bulow Campbell Library

David Schmersal, Access and Instruction Librarian, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

There was also some discussion of our custodianship of Atla's Websites on Religion Libguide <https://atla.libguides.com/WOR>

## **ROUND ROBIN REPORTS**

**Princeton Seminary** – Princeton is now offering two new degree programs, a Master of Arts in Theology (Justice and Public Life) and a Master's in Theology, Ecology, and Faith Formation. The Wright Library has also hired two new staff members and has two openings. The library has a new website that is now incorporated into the Seminary's website. They are no longer loading e-book and e-journal records into the catalog and have switched to having them loaded directly into Summon.

**St. Mary's Seminary and University** - Knott Library has a small staff but is the largest theological library in the area, serving both seminarians and the wider community. Staff have been preparing instruction and information literacy programs for the fall.

**Candler School of Theology, Emory University** - Candler has begun offering a hybrid MDiv degree. Pitts has recently hired an Online Learning Librarian focused on digital pedagogy. Pitts is offering two research fellowships, the Kessler fellowship and the Morgan English Bible and Psalmody fellowship (in collaboration with Columbia). Pitts has begun an Outreach Student Advisory committee, which will seek to find ways to connect students in Emory University's Religion department with Candler's collections. Pitts has also re-formed its friends of the library group.

## **OTHER**

Our small group discussed programming ideas to pursue, or advocate, as an interest group, focused on building community within Atla and offering professional development opportunities. One suggestion is developing a shared virtual reference platform that would be staffed by theological librarians and available to all students at Atla member seminaries (and possibly other students and members of the public). Since many students are able to attend classes remotely and thus do not necessarily live in the same time zone as their home libraries, this would allow students to obtain reference and research assistance from librarians who are in the same time zone (or, if students are working late, still be able to contact a theological librarian when the staff at their home institutions may have signed off for the day). Natalie from Atla noted that the reciprocal borrowing program provides an option for students to have access to participating local theological libraries. We also discussed the possibility of creating a guide to share best practices for training student workers, the desire to engage Atla members through more casual connections (for example, through an Atla Discord server), and the need for outreach to library schools to recruit the next generation of theological librarians.