
Special Collections

Alison Poage, Seminary of the Southwest, Convener

MEMBERS PRESENT

- Alison Poage, Seminary of the Southwest
- Liz Leahy, Azusa Pacific Seminary & University
- Armin Siedlecki, Emory University
- Jane Elder, Southern Methodist University
- David Buresh, Virginia Theological Seminary
- Alyssa, seminarian, Virginia Theological Seminary
- Brother Andrew Kosmowski, North American Center for Marianist Studies
- Phillipa Rosman, Phillips Theological Seminary
- Terence Sheridan, Amridge University
- Patrick Milas, New Brunswick Theological Seminary
- Indira Douglas, New Brunswick Theological Seminary
- Cindy Aalders, Regent College
- Tim Erdel, Bethel University
- Field, William Booth College

AGENDA

Meeting agenda and summary of discussion.

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Reflections on Atla Annual (in Pittsburgh and virtual)
- 3) Round Robin Reports (see below)
- 4) Questions Regarding the Stated Core Values of Atla (Cindy Aalders, Representing the Atla Board of Directors)

ATLA ANNUAL REVIEW

The presentation about the Catholic News Archives, *Expanding Research Horizons: The Catholic News Archive as a Resource for Social and Cultural Inquiry*, was appreciated by several members in the group. Others mentioned the program *Archives in the Seminary*

Classroom: Developing Critical Thinking and Historical Awareness in Theological Education was helpful. *From Rare Books to Real Connections: Rethinking Outreach Through Active Engagement with Primary Resources* was discussed and several group members who were present attended this hands-on workshop about *Books and Brews* offered by Candler School of Theology. Armin clarified that the “brews” referred to brewed coffee not beer! The hands-on approach in this conference session was applauded.

Armin reminded the group that, historically, SCIG has organized field trips to coincide with the Atla conference. He said there are funds put aside for interest groups to take field trips. Several members of the group reminisced about memorable field trips to a book binder in Denver, a racetrack in Charlotte, the Billy Graham Center, The Huntington Library’s preservation lab, and Cindy’s library in Vancouver.

Liz, who has served on the conference planning committees, said it is important to publicize field trips well in advance so people can arrange their travel accordingly. She recommends that this group could send the 2026 conference planning committee a note to open conversation about a SCIG sponsored field trip once the 2026 Atla Annual location is announced, and to be sure to include Atla staff person Denise McFarlin on the communication.

Patrick was encouraged to hear about funding. He remembered visiting Cindy’s library and a Native American museum in Indianapolis. Patrick mentioned that he and Indira needed to leave the meeting early so we segued into our reports.

ROUND ROBIN REPORTS

New Brunswick Theological Seminary: The archivist position was eliminated in December 2024. Patrick and Indira are trying to fill in the gaps in the meantime. Christina has taken a position as a cataloger and Digital Services Librarian at Drew University where she’ll start next month.

Seminary of the Southwest: The Harrison library opened with a new Special Collections room that holds about 2,500 linear inches of

shelving. Adjacent to the Special Collections room is a Digitization Room that also holds some shelving for media items such as VHS, DVD, and photographic negatives. Digitization projects are led by Assistant Library Director Duane Carter. Past projects include working on digitizing seminary material, such as the seminary newsletter, *Ratherview*, student theses, student directories, and historic academic catalogs and commencement bulletins. They accomplished this with the help of a KIC Bookeye scanner that was purchased in 2021 and “library school” students hired as part time interns while they attend University of Texas.

They don’t have a good software solution for providing these digital documents to their users just yet. For the time being, they have shoe-horned them into a libguide using Google Drive to store the documents on the back end. Harrison Library is partnering with the Office of Advancement and Communications (OAC) to convert seminary photographic negatives into digital images that can be used on the seminary’s website and other outlets. The library has acquired an Epson Perfection V850 Pro Scanner. Through conversation with their colleagues in OAC, they identified two areas of interest to focus on first: seminary class photos and Dean Durstan R. McDonald (tenure as Dean: 1984-2002).

Southern Methodist University: Director of the Bridwell Library, Anthony Elia, secured a 2.5-million-dollar grant from the Lilly Foundation to create a lab for the history and future of print and paper making.

Azusa Pacific Seminary & University: Liz Leahy reported that APU has had a lot of activity with their Henrietta Mears collection this year. A new film, *Mears: How One Woman Changed American Christianity*, utilized many photos and resources from their collection. The film is now available on Amazon Prime. The film premiere was shown on campus as part of a two-day celebration of Mears, including guest speaker Dr. Melisa Ortiz Berry, who spoke at chapel and at the annual Mary Hill Women in Leadership luncheon. Liz and her colleague, Larry Handy, put together an exhibit that presented the life and ministry of Mears, and the individuals and organizations she influenced. A number of scholars have accessed the collection for various projects in the past year.

Materials from their Goodknight Collection of CS Lewis and Tolkien studies are on loan to the Museum of the Bible for a current exhibit. Liz also created an exhibit which celebrated the 125th anniversary of the University in Fall 2024. Otherwise, the University Libraries have mostly closed their Special Collections and Archives after losing the funding for the Special Collections/Archivist position. They are currently seeking a new Assistant/Associate Provost for the University Libraries, and once hired, hope to make the Special Collections librarian the next major hire.

North American Center for Marianist Studies: Brother Andrew Kosmowski is the outgoing president of Catholic Library Association. At NACMS, three international brothers joined them for the year to learn how to operate a center for Marianist studies, including a crash course in technical services, especially on the basics of cataloging and classification. Brother Andrew published an article on their in-house classification system and is looking forward to writing an article on religious subject headings, since many they use are not on the approved list by the Library of Congress. The article will be a response to an article that came out recently in *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* on Catholic subject headings by Deirdre Sullivan. Brother Andrew is planning on entering a doctoral program in the fall with a dissertation topic on Catholic school librarians as Catholic school leaders. After a recent ILS migration he is doing major metadata cleanup.

Regent College: The Puritan Project at the Allison Library exists to contribute to worldwide study of the seventeenth-century Puritans by providing early editions of primary sources read or written by the Puritans and modern secondary sources about the Puritans. The Puritan Project funding ran out about a year and a half ago and the assistant position was eliminated.

Virginia Theological Seminary: There is a new head librarian previously on the faculty, Dr. Joseph Thompson, who took over after Dr. Mitzi Budde retired as head librarian after 33 years. About this time last year, they brought almost 8,000 rare books down from General Theological Seminary. VTS has an affiliation with them and these books made up the year's biggest project. The second half of the year, they had the responsibility of closing down and emptying the library at General, except for about 10,000 open stacks books. They

also brought down almost the entire archives—approximately 200 years’ worth of archival materials. Apart from what they obtained, they worked with a very reputable rare bookseller, James Cummins. If anyone is interested in these books, they can look at the James Cummins bookseller website. Fortunately, many of the rare books had very good records in their Koha system.

Emory University: Armin shared they have a new site for digital collections that opened a few weeks ago. The site is new and improved and allows for better access to the digitized material. All the exhibits are virtual—a site visitor can go virtually into the exhibit room, move around, and “stand” in front of the cases. The current exhibit on American hymnody will close at the end of June. There is a strong emphasis on shape note singing, but the exhibit also includes other elements of American hymnody. They also recently inherited the library of Jürgen Moltmann, who passed away last December. Moltmann had a good relationship with the seminary. In fact, he even thought about coming and teaching at Candler School of Theology, but apparently his wife vetoed the move to Atlanta, so he stayed at University of Tübingen, where he taught for most of his life. The University of Tübingen received his personal archives, while Emory received his library, which consists of approximately 6,000 volumes. They are temporarily housed in a storage unit and are working through the donation. The collection also included Moltmann’s typewriter, on which he wrote *Theology of Hope* and other important works. Hopefully there will be a joint project with the University of Tübingen. Armin kindly answered a few questions from the group about their new digital platform called Omeka.

Bethel University: Tim clarified that the Bethel University where he works is ten minutes from the University of Notre Dame and affiliated with the Missionary Church. Right now, Tim’s main portfolio as a retired person (not on salary) is to work with the Missionary Church archives. With recent changes in leadership, he has been on the front lines of denominational issues more than he expected to be as an archivist.

Phillips Theological Seminary: Phillips shared that her institution’s denomination is Disciples of Christ. They have other tracks of study for other denominations as well. They are doing a pilot program where their archive will be a repository for Disciples of

Christ churches that are closing, so she is going to be partnering with the Disciples of Christ Historical Society's lead archivist. She is also looking to obtain a digital platform for their collections, which are housed locally on their servers. She is excited to be getting a new assistant, which will be helpful as there is a lot of rehousing that needs to be done. Much of the material has been kept in document boxes and not in folders. There is one inventory form from the 1980s, but there is still a lot of development necessary.

QUESTIONS REGARDING ATLA CORE VALUES

The group turned to Atla's stated values. The conversation was led by Cindy Aalders, who was representing the Atla Board of Directors. The core values were found in the 2015 Atla Strategic Plan and were examined by the group for feedback:

Atla Core Values:

- Excellence in library collections and services
- Widest possible access to relevant information and ideas
- Hospitality, inclusion, and diversity
- Collegiality and collaboration
- Creativity, innovation, and transformation

It was noted that these core values could be for almost any organization, or any library, and are so general as to possibly not really communicate anything.

Other things noted:

- The core values do not mention people
- The core values do not mention religion or theology
- Some more definition or explanation for broad terms such as "transformation" or "creativity" might add some specificity

Atla Strategic Plan: <https://www.atla.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Atla-Strategic-Plan-2015.pdf>

We reached the end of our scheduled time. Alison invited participants to email notes about their round robin report and noted she would use the transcript of the meeting to help write the report for the Yearbook. Alison shared the link to information about the Special Collections Interest Group: <https://www.atla.com/learning-engagement/ig/scig/>.