
Public Services

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

MEMBERS PRESENT

- David Schmersal, Wright Center, Austin Seminary
- Kate Wimer, George Fox University
- Jane Elder, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, SMU
- Marlon Patterson, Harrison Library, Seminary of the Southwest
- Virginia Dearborn, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Robert Cagna

AGENDA

- 1) Review: Atla Annual Conference session sponsored by PSIG
- 2) Reminder: PSIG's role in the "Websites on Religion LibGuide"
- 3) Discussion: Core values with Atla board member Kate Wimer
- 4) Round Robin Reports: Institutional updates

YEAR IN REVIEW

As is the case nearly every year, PSIG sponsored a panel presentation at the Atla Annual conference in Pittsburgh: "Minions, Secret Weapons, Future Colleagues: Student Workers in Theological Libraries." Two of our members present (David and Marlon) were panelists.

Members of the PSIG (David and Robin McCall) were also panelists in a presentation on neutrality in theological libraries: "Taking Sides?: When, If Ever, Might It Be Appropriate for a Theological Librarian to Share a Conviction, or Express an Opinion, in a Reference Interview, Book Selection, etc.?"

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

BOARD DISCUSSION: CORE VALUES

Atla board member Kate Wimer reminded the group of the board's strategy to lead from the Association's values, making sure that we remember who we are and that we maintain what is important to the association. To this end, she shared the core values of the association and asked the group three questions: (1) Do these values of the association resonate with you as a member? (2) Is there a value that you don't see reflected, so something that you think should be there that is not, and (3) Is there a value that you think is no longer relevant?

The group discussed the word "transforming" included in the core values, asking "What is it we're supposed to be transforming?" and observing that there are some things (like generous endowments) that we would not want to be transformed. Members found it noteworthy that the word "transformation" is used and not "formation," especially considering ATS moving from a more vocational, professional model of theological education to one of personal and spiritual formation. Members also noted that the term transformation is not really counterbalanced by emphasis on conserving and preserving what is good in some of the traditions of our institutions and our profession.

Members of the group also discussed which core values are of greatest importance, noting specifically the importance of pursuing excellence in service and collections, particularly as it relates to our work as librarians, and the importance of collegiality and collaboration in relation to the association and our fellow members.

Members also noted the absence of any mention of ongoing education or professional development, which is surprising given the many opportunities Atla offers for continuing education, including the annual conference and the microcredentials on AI offered in collaboration with ATS and InTrust.

One member noted the utility of Atla's LibGuides, specifically "Websites on Religion," as a resource for clergy and other community patrons, but lamented how often such valuable resources go undiscovered.

ROUND ROBIN REPORTS

David Schmearsal, Austin Seminary: Austin Seminary has updated its branding and color scheme. Some members of the library staff are involved in a committee working to revise AI policies and suggest strategies for incorporating AI in instruction and operations.

Jane Elder, Bridwell Library, SMU: Bridwell's director, Anthony Elia, received a Lily grant for a renovation that will incorporate a print lab and paper-making lab.

Marlon Patterson, Seminary of the Southwest: Harrison Library is closed while undergoing a minor acoustic interior renovation. Staff are working on projects such as processing an archival collection from the communications department. The Harrison Library shares its ILS with the Wright Center at Austin Seminary and is in its second year of using Koha, which is going well. He also noted the most-circulated items in the collection are play therapy kits, which are used by students in the counseling program. Marlon attended his first Atla conference in person and was a panelist.

Virginia Dearborn, Princeton Theological Seminary: Princeton has recently hired a new staff member on their digital initiatives team, a digital library technologist, after the position had been open for a few years. Princeton also has an opening for head of cataloging and will be posting a vacancy for a reference librarian position later this summer.

Kate Wimer, George Fox University: There has been turnover in two of four positions in the library this summer, which has given the remaining staff an opportunity to gain two excellent new colleagues and rebalance liaison areas. They have just completed their ATS self-study. Kate noted her gratitude for the support of her institution's administration.