
Special Collections

Cindy Aalders, Regent College, Co-Convenor

MEMBERS PRESENT

- Brian Shetler, Princeton Theological Seminary, Convenor
- Cindy Aalders, Regent College, Co-Convenor
- Chris Anderson, Yale Divinity Library
- Patrick Cates, General Theological Seminary
- Sarah Danser, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Jane Elder, Southern Methodist University
- Connor Flatz, St. Joseph's Seminary
- Dan Flores, Texas Lutheran Seminary
- Stephanie Garrett, Tenn-Share (Tennessee library consortium)
- Roger Loyd, Duke Divinity School (retired)
- Patrick Milas, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

MEETING

The Special Collections Interest Group met online via Zoom as part of Atla Annual 2021 on Tuesday, June 22, 2021, 1:00–2:00 pm Central Time. The meeting was convened by Brian Shetler, Princeton Theological Seminary.

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
- 2) Update on SCIG Convenor and Co-Convenor
- 3) Update on Listserv and Connect
- 4) Atla Annual 2021 Recap
- 5) SCIG plans for Atla Annual 2022
- 6) Institutional Reports
- 7) New Business

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Brian Shetler welcomed everyone to the meeting and brief introductions were made.

UPDATE ON SCIG CONVENOR AND CO-CONVENOR

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic Brian Shetler and Cindy Aalders agreed to continue in their roles as convener and co-convener, respectively. Part of the duties of these roles is to set up the SCIG excursion in Atla Annual's host city, but the pandemic interrupted excursions in 2020 and 2021. Consistency in convenership seemed the best way to ensure a smooth transition back to in-person conferences and the resumption of excursions. Brian and Cindy will work together to plan the excursion in Baltimore in 2022. Since normal practice is for the co-convener to become the convener, Cindy will serve as convener in 2022, and we will appoint a new co-convener at our 2022 meeting.

UPDATE ON LISTSERV AND CONNECT

Brian Shetler informed the group that the SCIG listserv will move to a new online portal. He directed members to Atla's blog (<https://www.atla.com/blog/new-atla-community-site-coming-soon/>) for more information.

ATLA ANNUAL 2021 RECAP

The group discussed Atla's recent conference, particularly as it pertained to special collections. Patrick Milas expressed his appreciation for the attention given to anti-racism during the conference and wondered about the possibilities of this theme for special collections. He asked, how can we authentically steward special collections that are heavily concerned with the cultural heritage of white people and engage with the emerging church and theological education today? Jane Elder indicated that she had attended an online rare book school where they talked about how cataloging and subject headings obscure, erase, and overlook indigenous identities. She asked, how do our library records perpetuate societal imbalances? The recent RBMS (Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ALA) conference included sessions concerned with necessary changes to

cataloguing method. Stephanie Garrett reported that she attended an RBMS session on place-making. She asked, what can we do to change our space so that it attracts people to special collections? Attention must be given to how we present material. Brian Shetler described he changed a wall of portraits that had contained only white men so that now there is more diverse representation. Chris Anderson spoke about an Atla Annual session where Bo Adams gave a presentation on the collaborative possibilities of theological libraries. He asked, how could these principles be extended to special collections? Chris introduced the China Historical Christian Database (<https://chcdata-base.com>), which is a collaborative project intended to map China's Christian past. He indicated that the director of the project is looking for collaborators on Chinese missions and he invited members to be in touch with him if they were interested. The question arose, could SCIG put together a session for Atla Annual 2022 (perhaps on this database)?

SCIG PLANS FOR ATLA ANNUAL 2022

The group expressed excitement to returning to an in-person conference in Baltimore in 2022 and discussed SCIG conference plans. Liz Leahy (in abstenia) suggested possibilities for a Baltimore excursion. She indicated that Cheryl Adams had put together a list some years ago: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/main/religion/maryland.html>. Liz also indicated that Washington, DC is only an hour away from Baltimore, so we might also consider the Museum of the Bible and/or the Library of Congress; she has possible contacts at both locations. Stephanie Garrett suggested an excursion to the Nimitz Library at the US Naval Academy, where she has a former co-worker.

Patrick Milas raised the possibility of doing something collaboratively with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) and said he would follow up with them.

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

Roger Loyd, was Director of Duke Divinity School (retired) Durham, North Carolina, retired – retirement is good. Moved rare materials to university; they loan materials to seminary for display. University very good at working rare books into curriculum.

Drew University

Following Brian Shetler's move to Princeton, there is a new special collections posting at Drew, specifically in Methodist studies: <https://www.drew.edu/human-resources/about-us/employment-opportunities/>.

General Theological Seminary

During the past year the library has been open to students and faculty, and it has just reopened to the public. They recently lost their archivist.

New Brunswick Theological Seminary

The library lost a part-time archivist, which has resulted in some services gaps, and gained a digital services librarian, which has addressed a backlog. The library was entirely closed until June, after which faculty and students could make appointments to visit; they look forward to opening fully in August. The past year saw a greater focus on digitization. The library has also applied for a grant to address preservation needs in special collections.

Princeton Theological Seminary

Partway through the year, Brian Shetler moved to Princeton where he began a new position in special collections. In mid-June the library returned to normal hours for students, faculty, and staff, and they hope to reopen fully in the fall. New special collections exhibits will be mounted soon. The library has also recently changed its ILS and staff are working on an enormous cleanup project. The library also has many relatively obscure collections from Latin America and is working to make them more accessible and useful for teaching and research.

Regent College

In the past year Regent continued to purchase rare books written by seventeenth-century Puritan authors, as part of their larger Puritan Project, which is funded by a generous donor. Online teaching during the past year provided additional opportunities to use rare books in classes. Due to the pandemic the library has not mounted any in-person exhibitions, but it has begun to experiment with online exhibitions. A major project this year was the acquisition of the papers and library of Dr. J. I. Packer, a longtime faculty member at

Regent who died in July 2020. The papers in particular are extensive, and the library now requires an archivist to prepare it for researchers.

Southern Methodist University

Special collections at the Bridwell Library is coming to the end of a two-year renovation project and will be reopening soon. Material held at the World Methodist Museum in Alaska will be moving to the library, and they have also acquired four historic printing presses from the Methodist Publishing House in Nashville. The library has recently lost its archivist, and the position is being recast before hiring.

St. Joseph's Seminary

The seminary has been teaching in a hybrid format since September. Currently, the library and school are working on accreditation material.

Tenn-Share (Tennessee library consortium)

The library consortium is in the middle of significant transition and is looking to fill a new position in theological librarianship.

Texas Lutheran Seminary

Dan Flores has been the director of the library for two weeks. He took the opportunity of the SCIG meeting to thank Roger Loyd (formerly of Duke Divinity School) for his role as an early career mentor.

Yale Divinity School

The library is currently searching for a new director and a new technical services librarian position, the latter including responsibility for cataloguing special collections. Chris Anderson has worked on teaching and learning programs this year, searching for ways to connect special collections with curriculum. The past year has seen success, with fifty class sessions being held in the library. Chris has also connected with the chaplain regarding plans to have a chapel session in conjunction with special collections each semester. The library had a good experience setting up a reservation system during the pandemic and will likely continue to use this system in the future.



2020-2021 GROUP: [pictured, left to right] Cindy Aalders, Brian Shetler, Stephanie Garrett, Jane Elder, Patrick Milas, Chris Anderson, Roger Loyd, Patrick Cates, Connor Flatz