PERSONALIZING THE PANDEMIC

Experiences of Theological & Religious Studies Librarians During COVID-19

— EDITED BY —

Megan E. Welsh and Ian Burke

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Introduction

MEGAN E. WELSH AND IAN BURKE

When we think back to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recall the scarcity of some basic resources (who knew toilet paper would be such a desired commodity!); we remember the uncertainty of how to contract and, therefore, avoid the new, deadly virus; we reflect on the privilege of being able to work from home; and we think about the concern we embodied as we faced a future with questions about when we may see loved ones again, and what we would do if we became sick. Feelings and experiences shifted throughout the pandemic where community, oftentimes over virtual platforms, interrupted isolation, and hope for a "post-pandemic" future disrupted fear and anxiety. While some common themes permeated our shared experience as we lived through this collective trauma, each individual experience was unique and, ultimately, our professional experiences of the pandemic varied just as much as our personal ones.

Our aim in this volume is to personalize the pandemic by curating chapters that describe the experiences and practices of theological and religious studies librarians during the first few years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the chapters in this book begin by bringing us back to March 2020, when COVID-19 began to impact Europe and North America, leading to restrictions in travel, imposed isolation, and closed library doors, all in an attempt to contain a new virus sweeping the globe. Like the chapter authors, we want you to recall the time when the pandemic began to deeply impact your life. Take a moment to consider how much you have learned, how you have grown, and what you have experienced since then. We want you to look towards the future while acknowledging that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate aftermath will reverberate through each of us, our libraries, and the field of librarianship in the decades to come.

As Patrick Milas states in his chapter, "Library Leadership in the Long Lockdown & Beyond": "People take different amounts of time to process unprecedented and potentially traumatic information and events" (*254*). This book is published four years after many of our libraries closed and our lives shifted, and we are all still processing. We are still grappling with the pandemic's impacts and how we live in a world forever changed by the danger of disease. The COVID-19 pandemic was not something that only affected theological and religious studies librarians. This was a time of great uncertainty and change, both within the theological and religious studies library community and around the world. We hope that this volume will be a source of inspiration detailing how the field of theological and religious studies librarianship navigated adversity with creativity and perseverance, and also as an aid to researchers seeking to understand how this particular professional community addressed the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Libraries within the Context of the Pandemic

As this volume is centered on a particular moment in recent history, we understand that further context regarding the history of the COVID-19 pandemic (and the various responses to it within the library profession) may be useful, particularly for readers for whom the experience is not a recent memory. Even at the time of writing, it can be difficult to recall the social distancing protocols from early

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2020, or more recent masking requirements in public places and healthcare facilities. The goal of this section is to present a short history of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to discuss the roles of libraries within this broader context.

The disease now known as COVID-19 (an abbreviation for "Coronavirus Disease 2019") was first identified in Wuhan, China in November 2019 as a "pneumonia of unknown cause" (Ghebreyesus 2023). On January 9, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that Chinese authorities had determined that the outbreak was caused by a novel coronavirus; on January 11, the first death from the virus was reported in Chinese media; on January 13, Thai health officials reported the first lab-confirmed instance of the viral infection outside of China. The first several months of 2020 saw a steady flow of news and public statements about the coronavirus as regional, national, and international public health groups worked to assess the severity and intensity of the new disease, which was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organization 2021). In the United States, the pandemic was declared a nationwide emergency on March 23. Many urban centers saw a spike in cases and deaths in April 2020, with New York City being particularly impacted (later analysis showed a 19% increase in mortality in 2019-2020 compared to previous years; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023). To slow the spread of the then-unfamiliar disease, new restrictions on travel and socializing were put in place. Supply chain disruptions were common, both within the healthcare industry and in consumer settings. Unemployment spiked in 2020 as travel, entertainment, and other industries curtailed operations, while others could not work due to illness. While variants of the illness continued to cause major outbreaks, 2021 also saw rapid development and deployment of vaccines against the virus. Although vaccination campaigns faced vocal opposition from some parts of the population, the deployment of vaccines is credited with reducing the rate of hospitalization and deaths from COVID-19 during the "Delta" and "Omicron" variant outbreaks in 2021 and 2022 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023). Following a period of reduced outbreak severity and growing confidence in treatment options, the WHO Director-General declared an end to the pandemic as a "global health emergency" in May 2023, while stressing that the disease and its variants remained an ongoing threat and that the disease had "laid bare the searing inequalities of our world," with access to treatment continuing to be a struggle for poor communities (Ghebreyesus 2023).

The library community's early response to these stresses were noted in surveys conducted in March and May 2020 by the American Library Association and partner organizations such as the Public Library Association. Responding to the March survey, 98% of public libraries reported closing their facilities to the public, in line with state shelter-in-place orders. Most respondents also reported an increase in online services as well as difficulties handling the staffing changes implied by a shift away from physical services (American Library Association 2020a). This survey also mentioned a number of steps taken by libraries to help support their communities during the early pandemic, including expanding access to digital services, coordinating distribution of emergency supplies, and using makerspace equipment to create medical supplies such as face shields (American Library Association 2020a). A smaller-scale survey of the initial response to pandemic conditions from academic libraries was conducted by Hinchliffe and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020) and reported a rapid move to online classes and limitations to accessing academic library facilities.

A May 2020 survey included responses from academic and K-12 libraries, as well as public libraries. The majority of responding libraries of all types reported some level of budget decrease, particularly with regard to payroll and costs associated with maintaining print materials. In this survey, reopening facilities to the public was also discussed. Although there was no consensus on reopening strategies, common themes from plans to reopen included enhanced cleaning guidelines, material quarantine, and responsiveness to local conditions (American Library Association 2020b).

In 2021, along with James Estes, we conducted a series of surveys and interviews focused on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic within the theological and religious studies library community, and centering the experiences of library deans and directors. The results of our research were summarized in the April 2021 issue of *Theological Librarianship* (Welsh, Burke, & Estes 2021). This study built on prior work recording the initial library response to the pandemic, such as those mentioned above as well as resources and experiences discussed among Atla members (Atla 2020a; Atla 2020b). The responses to our research, conducted while many social distancing policies were still in place in the United States, described broad trends related to supporting remote work and learning. A significant minority of respondents to the survey also mentioned financial stresses and staffing changes catalyzed by the closure of campus facilities as higher education institutions sought to mitigate the risk of viral contagion. This research confirmed trends identified

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in broader surveys of the US library community while highlighting the unique stressors library administrators in theological library settings faced at the onset of the pandemic.

Now, just four years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, some shifts–such as hybrid and remote work policies–have become normalized, while other changes implemented during the pandemic's early stages–such as quarantine and disinfection of physical material or mandatory facemask protocols–have fallen away. Recording and memorializing this recent period of change could be of use to librarians and historians in the future; the 1918 influenza pandemic also led to a variety of library responses, ranging from facility closures, to book disinfection protocols, to the experience of supporting staff at increased risk of illness (Skinner, 2012). However, research on libraries' responses to the 1918 pandemic is complicated due to the lack of primary source documentation outside of meeting minutes and personal diaries. While we sincerely hope that readers of this work do not have to deal with another pandemic in the future, we also hope that they might use this volume to gain some understanding of the experience of the authors and their institutions.

It is important for us to remember that the pandemic was not an isolated social phenomenon, especially in North America. It highlighted economic issues with disruptions to global supply chains, disparities between types of work (essential vs. non-essential), and pay inequities, especially faced by those who could not afford to work from home or were mandated by the nature of their job to work on site. In the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement rose in prominence once again as the world bore witness to the murder of George Floyd, a Black man killed during a police arrest in May 2020, and to the deaths of many other victims of excessive police force. Civil unrest, including fears about the health of democracy, and racial justice were as important concerns as the pandemic with which they coincided. The communities in which religious studies and theological librarians live are still wrestling with these issues four years later.

Chapters in Context

Topics discussed in this volume range in format, content, and presentation. Some chapters emphasize original research while others highlight personal reflections. Throughout the book you will also see

original watercolor paintings by Hannie Riley (please see Hannie's artist statement just after this introduction). We have grouped chapters thematically on the topics of: adjusting to pandemic life, employing pastoral care strategies and supporting students in a library context, understanding the unique impact of the pandemic on special collections and archives, discussing changing technology, and employing adaptive management practices.

Adjusting to Pandemic Life

Michelle Spomer crafted her chapter, "Looking Back: Glimpses of the Pandemic," with words and images sourced from members of Atla, a professional organization composed of religious studies and theological librarians. It serves as a reminder of early pandemic experiences to which many of us can relate, and functions as an excellent introduction to the content that follows throughout this volume. Expanding upon these experiences, Evelyn Frangakis, Jenifer Gundry, and Jeremy Wallace describe how the pandemic impacted and related to their specific theological library context with their chapter, "The Pandemic as Chrysalis: How the Library at Princeton Theological Seminary Emerged with a New Identity." This chapter provides the reader with a clear timeline of one library's attempt to cope with the pandemic and adjust to shifting priorities. In a time of such uncertainty and change, Robert Burgess offers a narrative of transition as he moved to a new role at a new institution in a new state. As he explains in his chapter, "Stranger in a Strange Land in a Strange Time," the pandemic directly impacted the trajectory of his career, and offered a surprising opportunity for growth and re-definition. Burgess also touches on changes to core library services and adjustments to outreach and library programming meant to engage patrons, especially students, during this difficult time.

Pastoral Care & Student Support

The pandemic afforded librarians an opportunity to reconsider how they care for patrons, colleagues, and themselves. This section discusses notions of care and how we can act on concern for those around us. Deanna Roberts and Jude Morrissey describe how they apply pastoral care specifically to their supervision of library student

employees in their chapter "Re-Visioning Student Staff Management Through a Pastoral Care Lens." Discussing the impacts of the pandemic on students, Victoria Tsonos and Marta Samokishyn explore the lived experiences of students at their institution and offer recommendations grounded in sentiments of care and with consideration of the nuance and complexity of students' lives. The chapters in this section remind us of our shared humanity and how we can harness kindness to connect with one another even during our most challenging moments.

Special Collections & Archives

While the pandemic impacted all aspects of library functioning, special collections and archives were uniquely affected. Based strongly in print primary sources and historic artifacts, special collections and archives personnel had to reinvent ways to engage their patrons while also considering how to best document the pandemic for posterity. Brian Shetler describes his experience as someone responsible for managing personnel and these distinct collections across two different institutions in his chapter, "The Changing Realities of Special Collections and Archives: Facing the Future with Confidence and Confusion." In their chapter, "COVID-19 Web Archives: Evolving Catholic and Marian Devotional Practices," Kayla Harris and Stephanie Shreffler share how they leveraged their expertise with archives and embraced technology in a remote work environment to capture digital artifacts representing the U. S. Catholic response to the pandemic and the increased devotion to the Virgin Mary that emerged.

Technology in Transition

While technology is ever-evolving, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital platforms, normalized the use of certain technologies, and legitimized online learning in higher education in a way we previously had not experienced. The tremendous growth of and opportunities provided by digital tools is evident in Hannie Riley's chapter, "Equipping Myself: From the Old Normal to the 'New Normal'." Riley simultaneously acknowledged the stress and isolation of the pandemic while also viewing it as a time to engage in

self-directed learning and to integrate technology and digital tools into her practice of librarianship. In their chapter, "Panic, Pivot, Plan: Pandemic Course Material Management," Elizabeth Miller and Caitlin Soma remind us "[t]here were still no library emergencies... but now the whole world felt like an emergency" (*196*). They describe the abrupt changes to workflows that accompanied the necessary shift to e-resources and the challenges of confronting "vocational awe" (Ettarh 2018) throughout their efforts to continue to provide access to library materials, both at the very beginning of the pandemic and as their institution transitioned back to more in-person activities. Benjamin Dueck further describes advancements in technology and the opportunities afforded by technological access, especially through the digitization of important and early primary source materials, in his chapter, "Spiritual Resonance in a Virtual Age: Reflecting on the Limitations that Digitized Primary Resources Pose for Theological and Religious Studies Communities." Yet, Dueck also carefully considers how we interact with and internalize digital items, reminding us that engagement mediated by technology is distinct from consuming media in their original forms.

Management & Leadership

"Transformational leadership" and "change management" were prevalent buzzwords even before library administrators faced the challenges of leading through sudden disruption within higher education. Bobby Smiley describes the challenges he faced as an interim and then permanent library director, while detailing how the emergency pandemic situation influenced his managerial and leadership practices beyond the initial sense of urgency. Drawing on his own "lessons learned," Smiley's chapter, "Meditations in an Emergency," ultimately encourages the reader to consider what good leadership looks like. We end this section and the entire volume with another chapter on leadership, "Library Leadership in the Long Lockdown & Beyond," by Patrick Milas. Milas infuses this chapter with anecdotes that relate how the pandemic impacted his professional role as a library director and his personal experience, especially as a caregiver. Weaving these aspects of his lived experiences together, Milas offers us a glimpse into managing a seminary library through many changes, all while reminding us of the humbling experience of the early days of the pandemic.

Looking to the Past to Look Toward the Future

In 2020, we, the editors of this volume, met in person twice: once in February before the pandemic was declared an emergency and a second time in October. During the first meeting, we recall discussing the potential concerns about medical supplies, and whether wearing a facemask on flights might be prudent. While we had a level of concern about the looming threat of COVID-19, the meeting was not significantly different from any other throughout the many years that we have been friends and colleagues. In October 2020, we cautiously gathered for a picnic lunch outside of Megan's house rather than meeting indoors. Ian had just flown to Colorado from the East Coast and wore a double-layered mask on the flight. Megan introduced Ian to her "pandemic puppy." We ate and waved our goodbyes across more than six feet of socially distanced space, conscious of the wind direction and thinking about how once we would have hugged goodbye. Now writing in summer 2023, although variants of COVID-19 continue to be concerning, we welcome the present-day opportunities of traveling, eating in restaurants, and hugging once again. We hope that this book offers a warm embrace to you as you remember your own personal and professional experiences of the pandemic, and we hope it offers researchers in years to come a glimpse of how we persevered during an uncertain time.

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Long-Forgotten Passion of My Youth

Artist Statement

The paintings throughout this book are a small selection of over 100 watercolor paintings created during the various lockdown periods. At the first stage of lockdown, I awakened a long-forgotten passion of my youth and discovered a love of watercolor painting. This unintentional development of my new hobby was somehow a product of forced isolation and limited resources.

While I spring-cleaned my teenagers' bedrooms in the first lockdown, I found a bundle of old, half-dry watercolor paint tubes and brushes, which were used by our boys during primary school. My initial reaction was to throw away these dust-gathering, dirty things as they were poor quality and well past their use-by date. I packed them hastily in a trash bag. However, strangely, I could not bring myself to drop them into the can, so I left it by the door for a few days. I eventually thought that there was nothing else to do in complete lockdown apart from sitting around being idle, so I would give a go at making this resource useful and trying something new out of it. Having said that, a few more weeks passed by as I was a little bit nervous about starting to paint. Eventually I had the courage to pick up a brush, but realized there was no white watercolor paper in the house. As all the shops were completely closed except for food and essentials, at first,

I thought my attempt had failed. However, I remembered I had a nice book of black paper suitable for watercolor painting, so I ended up using that.

This coincidental way of painting helped me to develop a unique technique based on Korean traditional folk painting, Minhwa. Minhwa painting originally was completed on colored backgrounds by layering colors over and over, so I watched a few YouTube videos to mimic the style and I then applied this to the black paper. However, my paper and paints were very different from Korean traditional ones, and so I had to create my own way to bring up the colors on the black paper. Finally, relaxation of lockdown rules allowed me to get some white paper.

My work captures a glimpse of beauty in plants and flowers from local fields, neighbor's gardens and parks in Oxford. I examined the flowers and plants carefully at first with my bare eyes in nature and took many pictures from various positions and angles with my mobile phone. At home I painted them by looking at the digital images I had captured earlier. I often revisited the site where I found them and re-examined them to make sure of the accuracy of the plants and flowers.

Despite completing more than 100 pieces of work, I continue to be in awe at the wonders of nature. Each piece was a meditation of healing to me during this difficult COVID period. In every stroke I learned humbleness in my limitation to express the beauty of God's creation. Trying to imitate His magnificent work makes me just stand in amazement of the works of His hands.

Over the last three years, my works have been displayed at Wycliffe Hall with those of colleagues as part of Oxfordshire Artweeks open studios and pop-up exhibition. Also, I feel privileged that my artwork is now published in this wonderful book. This is way beyond my expectation.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:24)

Hannie Riley, October 2023

Adjusting to Pandemic Life

Looking Back

Glimpses of the Pandemic

MICHELLE SPOMER

Many of us distinctly remember March of 2020. It is when we received emails from our institutions that read something like this: "Following guidance from Allegheny County officials and in an effort to help stop the spread of COVID-19, the Seminary campus is closed effective Tues., March 17 for a minimum of 14 days" (President Esterline, pers. comm., March 16, 2020). Little did we know then that the "minimum of 14 days" would stretch to over a year, and that we would experience one of the most extraordinary times of our lives.

This chapter is intended to help us remember and process, through photographs, what we experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on the first two years (2020-2021). The images also include descriptions and thoughts from the photographers – our fellow theological and religious studies librarians.

Libraries

We have known for a while that theological education is, to put it nicely, going through substantive change (Ruger and Wheeler 2013). As institutions struggle with decreased enrollment, finances, course delivery, and a host of other issues, so do their libraries and library staff. While I think a lot of us could use less experience "pivoting," theological librarians are some of the most adaptable professionals out there. Dealing with change on a regular basis before the pandemic gave many of us an advantage in dealing with the sudden lockdowns and tremendous upheaval of our work lives.

Library staffs around the world sprang into action and began planning for an extended library closure. Most of this planning prioritized the continued provision of resources and services for library users, especially students and faculty. In their article on the experiences of theological libraries during the pandemic, Megan E. Welsh, Ian Burke, and James Estes described the early response to the pandemic in this way:

> Methods employed by theological libraries in response to the pandemic included limiting the number of persons in the building at one time, symptom checks for employees, contact tracing, and quarantine for employees with symptoms or in contact with a known COVID-19 case. Some interview respondents also mentioned quarantine of materials brought in from outside the library, although the efficacy of this practice at limiting the spread of disease was questioned by one respondent. In general, pandemic mitigation measures were adopted in support of practical goals, such as allowing a return to in-person campus operations or supplying patrons with needed materials while reducing the risk of disease transmission. (2021, 8)

Who can forget trying to figure out where to get masks, and which masks to get (remember cloth masks?)? Or putting up social-distancing signage? Or assigning particular people to particular tasks (like checking in book-drop books) in the closed library building? And of course, many librarians sought to enhance their online offerings by purchasing e-books, developing online instruction, providing chat reference for the first time, or exploring controlled digital lending. Research guides, such as LibGuides, and website content increased. Articles and chapters were scanned for faculty. Creative ways of

getting print books to people were developed. Library projects, put off or not possible previously, were completed.

The following photographs illustrate some of what we dealt with in our Libraries when they were closed. While there is no doubt that there were limits to what we could provide for our Library users, there is also no doubt that we were committed to supporting them and innovating to meet their needs.
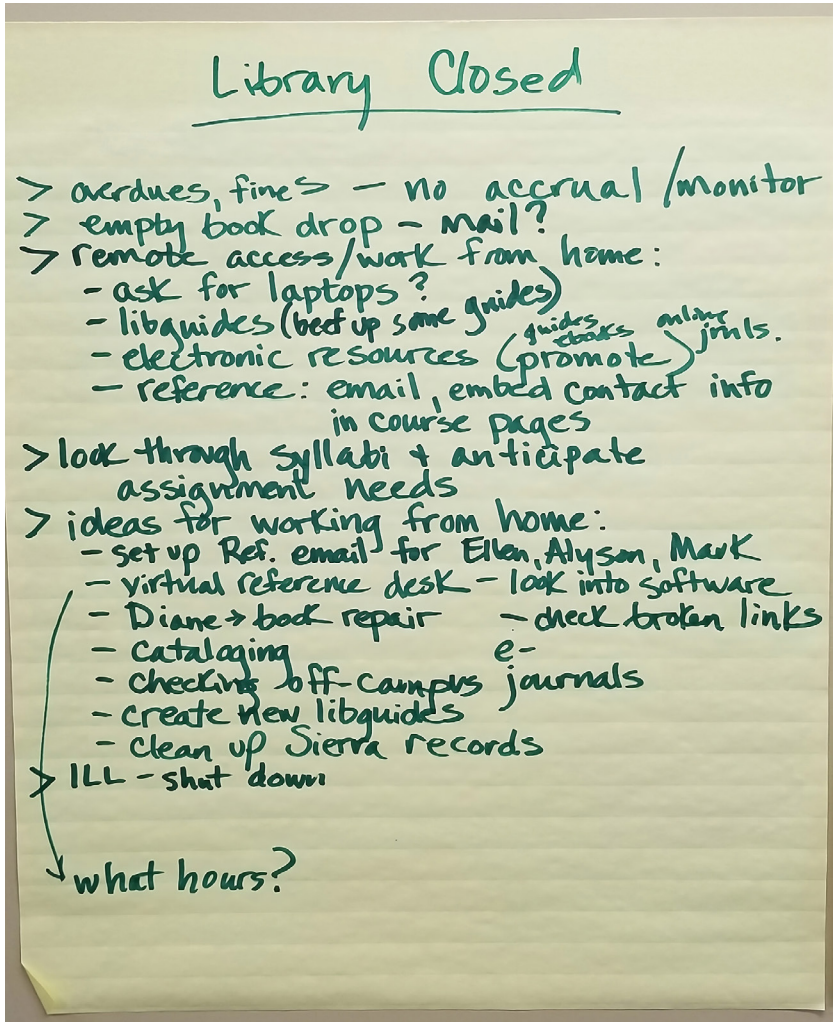
Image 1: Little did I know that this staff brainstorm session was the early beginnings of what would become a more formal Library closure and reopening plan. Photo by Michelle Spomer
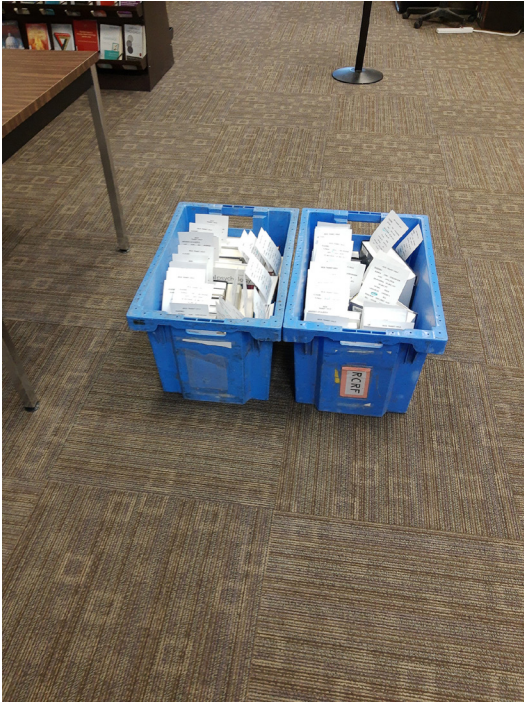
Image 2: This photo shows a pile-up of returns (we usually only have one or two books in a single bin three times a week instead of two full bins as shown) as the sorting facility was closed and various libraries had different types of availability... Some of the other institutions [in our consortium] had to stay online for a full year longer than we did, and did not offer the same level of physical in-person service, but had more capability for offering virtual services. Some libraries chose to quarantine books for varying lengths of time and one library even purchased a sterilization machine. It was a fascinating time to learn and grow together. I am thankful we were not alone. Photo by Karina Dunn

Image 3: As soon as we were closed to the public in the spring of 2020, we created low-touch 'Library Takeout' at our front door. Clients phoned or e-mailed to tell us what they needed, and we let them know when it was available for pickup. When they came to the door, they phoned our main desk and we brought the item(s) to them on a socially-distanced cart. This picture was taken before we knew about the need to mask. Photo by Marci Frederick

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Image 4: Throughout the lockdown [I] would visit to inspect all library areas with collections. Finding and affording unanticipated childcare needs was a challenge. Although the policy was only one staff member in the building per day, the lovely exception was [me] with [my] daughter, Maeve. Here she is showing which letters of a rare book title she can read ('what story is so long you need a book this big anyway?'). Photo by Patrick Milas

Image 5: During the pandemic, working from home was not an option for us. Since we no longer allowed the public into the library and students were taking classes online for the rest of the 2020 spring semester, we had less foot traffic and in-person requests for help. So we spent more time weeding the collection, cleaning shelves, and shifting books. While students returned in person for fall 2020 and the general public was permitted into the library in early 2022, we continued the work. These two photos show a before and after shot of the weeding and shifting. Photos by Connie Song

Image 6: This was the consistent pandemic view from my office out into the deserted library reference area. I found it so very sad not to share this beautiful library with others; even though we were open on a limited basis to members of the seminary community, we had very few visitors because of the caution around spreading illness, and it has taken (and will continue to take) some time to rebuild trust in using public spaces. Photo by Karl Stutzman

Image 7: Learning to understand without seeing people's lips. Photo by Karla Grafton

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Working from Home

As the pandemic progressed, we realized that working from home would become normal for most, if not all, Library staff. While some positions lent themselves to this new work modality, others were more problematic. Who would receive the mail and process print publications and ILL returns? Who would empty the book drop? Who would water the plants? How would books be shelved? Who would take care of getting books to our users? In my situation, I was the answer to these questions because I was the only one approved to be on campus in the early months. However, these visits to the Library were only a small part of my work week. For most of 2020 and 2021, I worked from home, as did the rest of the staff, with only necessary visits to the building.

Online, any circumstance became normalized. Dining rooms, bedrooms, and living rooms became our offices. Many of us had to balance family needs, such as taking care of children or homeschooling, with the demands of our jobs. Some of us adopted new pets (also known as "co-workers"). And then there were the ubiquitous online meetings, classes, and research assistance using Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting, and many other video conferencing platforms. "Zoom fatigue" became a reality (Ramachandran 2021). So did Zoom bingo ("Zoom bingo!" 2020). While some thrived in this online environment, many of us were looking for ways to boost morale (Williams 2021).

The images that follow are reminders of our work lives in the midst of quarantine. Some of us may still work from home more than we did pre-pandemic, while others have happily gone back to their previous work environments. It is clear, though, that how we do our work has changed – in many cases, significantly.

Image 8: For me, Zoom meetings were lifelines for connecting and getting things done, but also amplifications of isolation and disquiet. Photo by Michelle Spomer
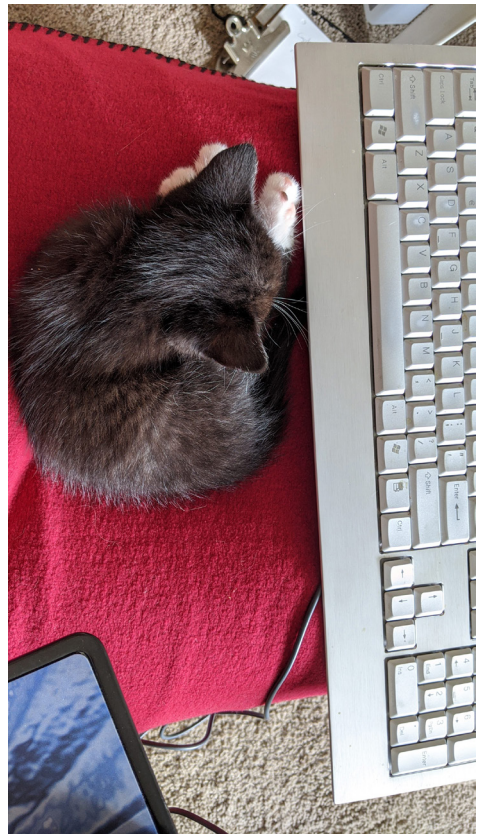
Image 9: A professor invited me to join her relaxing watch-my-kittens-play Zoom sessions for her students. Two months later, I sent a Teams message to library staff showing off my new laptop. Photo by Kathryn Floyd

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Image 10: The dining room became my home office, complete with new monitor and desk clutter. Pants were optional. Photo by Michelle Spomer

Personal Lives

I have a very clear memory from early in the pandemic, after the seminary had shut down and I had heard a sobering report about how contagious COVID-19 was. I was at a gas pump, staring down at the black nozzle, and wondering whether or not I should touch it with my bare hands or find a napkin to use as a barrier. I must have stood there for two or three minutes, fretting over what to do. Little did I know that this was just the beginning of adjusting to disrupted schedules and new routines.

Just about all aspects of our lives were impacted by the pandemic in some way. Not only did this include pumping gas, but also parenting, political expression, special occasions, health care, shopping, and education, to name a few. We took neighborhood walks, drove down empty city streets, walked down grocery store aisles a certain way, missed vacations and funerals, took up new hobbies, homeschooled our children, and stockpiled toilet paper. And we washed our hands. A lot.

We also had time to reflect on ourselves, our employment, our family life, our faith, and many other important and personal aspects of our lives. Some of us struggled with anxiety and depression (Panchal, Saunders, and Rudowitz 2023). Others of us decided to leave our jobs and pursue new opportunities, or dealt with decreased hours and job loss ("COVID-19 Economy's Effects" 2022). Many of us lost friends and loved ones without the chance to mourn them properly.

The photos included below represent a variety of experiences and encounters that some of us had in the earlier months of the pandemic. Some we would like to forget, and some we hope to continue.
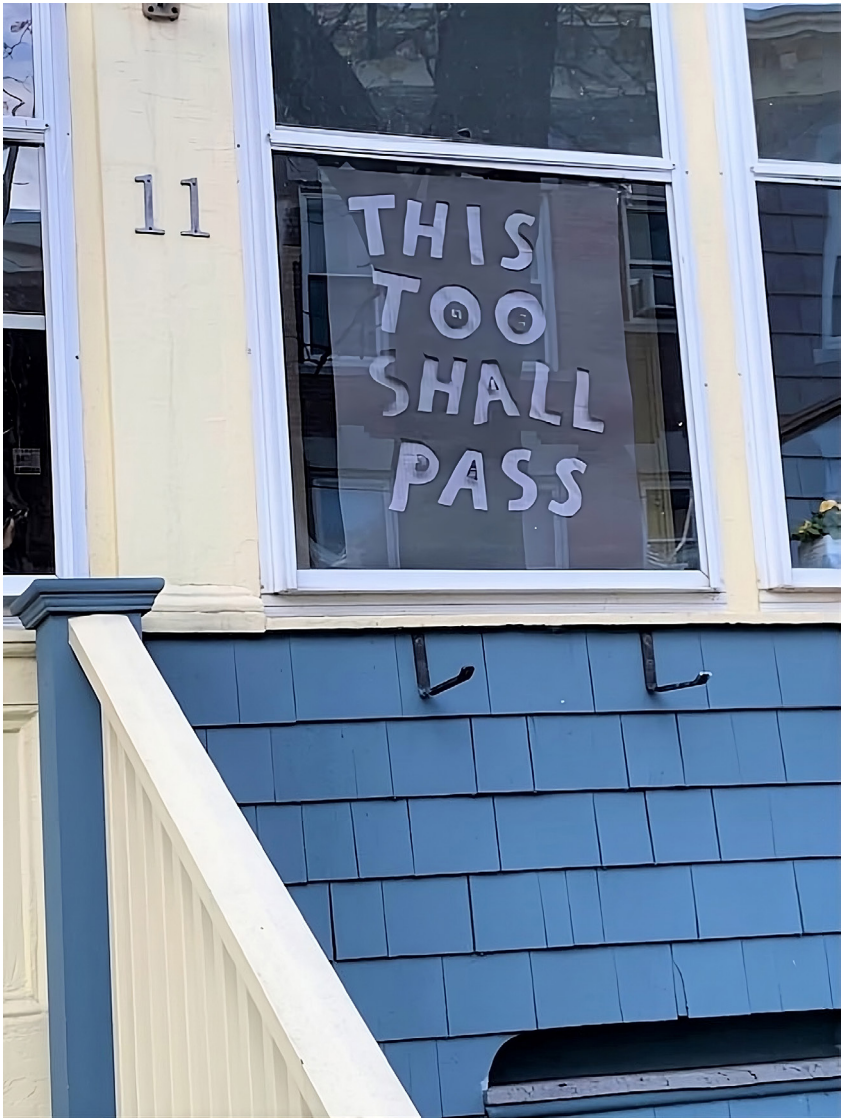
Image 11: This photo was taken on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, around 6:30 p.m. Working from home, the real highlight of my day was my daily walk around my neighborhood after I had finished working for the day. A lot of my neighbors posted signs of encouragement, and I particularly liked this one. Even though at that time I was not seeing anyone directly, it was good to know that we were all in this together – though apart – and to be reminded that even the bad times won't last forever. Photo by Amy Limpitlaw

Image 12: More perplexing to me than toilet paper shortages was the shortage of yeast in supermarkets everywhere. I scrounged message boards for news of where I could find this now seemingly 'hot' item. As with other families, life under quarantine allowed ours to reclaim life's simple pleasures like making homemade bread. Photo by Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir

Image 13: This photo was taken on July 4, 2020, in Wellfleet, MA on Cape Cod. Like many people, I was appalled by the tragic killing of George Floyd. During the summer of 2020, there were numerous demonstrations in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Since I was spending that weekend on Cape Cod for the July 4 weekend with my 'pod' – my sister and brother-in-law (the only people I spent time with during the 2020 lockdown) – when I heard about this protest, I decided to attend even though I was nervous about catching the virus (at the time, we didn't yet know that transmission out of doors was unlikely). As you see, there are children and adults holding signs, and everyone is masked. Photo by Amy Limpitlaw

Image 14: During the pandemic, I took a lot of walks in my neighborhood. Although I live in a city (Boston), I discovered that there are a lot of wild animals in my neighborhood, including hawks, owls, turkeys (lots of turkeys!), rabbits, snakes, turtles, and geese! Photo by Amy Limpitlaw

Image 15: The pandemic was utterly devastating when it came to spending time with loved ones as they went into hospitals or other types of care facilities. Many were not able to have even a window visit, as this photo depicts. I feel fortunate to have been able to visit my Dad in his COVID isolation room. Photo by Michelle Spomer

Spiritual Lives

Many theological and religious studies librarians have active religious or spiritual lives, and a subset of these regularly attend in-person worship services. Some would say that the most isolating aspect of COVID-19 restrictions was the inability to be with others in their faith communities, and to participate in worship services. Religious leaders began to explore ways that their congregants could be together, both in person and online. People of faith looked for different ways to continue various ministries and activities.

Initially, worshipers continued to meet together and generally adhered to social distancing and masking guidelines. Some met outdoors, while others gathered inside, sometimes requiring signing in for contact tracing (a system by which people who attended an event together are alerted if an attendee has contracted COVID-19) and temperature checks. In Christian churches, some choirs were either singing while masked, or disbanded altogether. Communion was often presented in the form of a two-in-one wafer and juice set. Jewish leaders dissuaded congregants from kissing religious objects, such as prayer books (Silver 2020). In parts of the Muslim world, Friday prayers were suspended, pilgrimages were banned, and worshipers were asked to bring their own prayer mats ("Coronavirus is Changing" 2020).

Online worship and religious gatherings became one of the only ways to safely connect within faith communities, and this proved to be a catalyst for otherwise technologically-challenged leaders to hastily acquire online skills and equipment. However, many faith communities throughout the world could not afford this transition. Anthropologist Kathinka Frøystad points out that "many Hindu priests and gurus went online," and then contrasts "the growing online presence of many prestigious Hindu temples with the inability of modest temples to follow suit" (Frøystad 2021, 16).

The photographs in this section portray both the practical pursuit of religious activity and hope in the midst of the pandemic. While some certainly lost their way or deliberately left their faith communities, still others saw their spiritual lives strengthened and renewed.

Image 16: At the beginning of the pandemic, when the weather was still warm, worship was held outdoors. Then the live-streamed online services got up and running, after which my husband and I would drive to the church and receive 'drive-thru communion.' It was not ideal, but I appreciated the ways in which our church staff innovated in meeting the needs of their parishioners. Photo by Michelle Spomer

Image 17: My wife and I have been involved with short-term mission trips to help Potter's House (Casa del Alfarero), a Christian relief and development agency our church partners with in Guatemala. Unfortunately, COVID put a hold on those trips, but we did it virtually for those two pandemic years! Much as we would for an in-person trip, we raised funds over the two years that enabled Potter's House to hire local masons to build a house for a family to replace their mud brick dwelling, build hygiene combo units to provide families with good, sanitary cleaning and cooking facilities, and provide food for school students and families in two locations. We were able to pray and interact with them in real time. Photo by Jeffrey Brigham

Image 18: During the pandemic I would come to the library twice a week to process the periodicals, and on one of those visits I caught our library, the Edward L. and Carrie E. Doheny Library, empty, but with a sign of hope – a beautiful rainbow. Photo by Victoria Brennan

Conclusion

One bright, sunny fall weekend, when it was just the right kind of chilly to go for a walk, I headed out to the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. It was October of 2022, and many pandemic restrictions had been lifted by that time. As I strolled down wooded paths, breathing in the autumn air, I kept an eye out for photograph-worthy scenes and subjects. I was particularly intent on getting to the small meadow, which was lined with trees that, in theory, would be awash in the vivid colors of fall. But as I wended my way through the meadow, I saw that, for the most part, the trees at the perimeter were still greener than what I had imagined. Disappointed, I turned around to retrace my steps in order to take a different trail. My eyes widened when I saw that the meadow was full of blooming goldenrod. It was stunning. In my haste to get to the "money shot" of fall foliage, I almost missed the wonder of a field full of goldenrod.

Perhaps it is too much of a stretch to compare a field of goldenrod to our pandemic experiences. But there is a certain beauty in how we've made it through, in how we have persisted in the midst of a chaotic time, and in how we were wonderfully creative in so many ways. So as we push into this new era of fewer COVID-19 restrictions, different ways of doing things, and the reclamation of our traditions, I hope we can take the time to look back. We may be astonished and encouraged by what we see.

For more photographs from your colleagues documenting personal experiences of the pandemic, please visit the Atla Commons (*https://atla.ir.atla.com*).

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The Pandemic as Chrysalis

*How the Library at Princeton Theological Seminary
Emerged with a New Identity*

EVELYN FRANGAKIS, JENIFER GUNDRY, AND JEREMY WALLACE

*J*orge Luis Borges, Argentinian polymath and eventual director of the National Public Library of Argentina, is credited with saying, "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library." As librarians, we hope that our libraries will be a kind of paradise for our patrons; however, during the pandemic, our experience at Princeton Theological Seminary, with a print-heavy library collection serving a residential community, seemed less than paradisiacal.

The pandemic period of 2020-2022 radically transformed the Library at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). Prior to the pandemic, Princeton Theological Seminary Library, as it was then known, functioned as a traditional theological library, with a large, legacy print collection designed primarily to serve the needs of a residential community of approximately 320 students and 40 faculty at the more than 200-year-old institution located in Princeton,

New Jersey. The Library is housed in an inspiringly beautiful building. It is a heavily used resource, and is comprised of approximately 2.25 million print and electronic books and journals in its general collections, a digital library (called "Theological Commons") of more than 150,000 resources, and a robust Special Collections and Archives department of rare books, manuscripts, archives, cuneiform tablets, art, artifacts, and digital archival collections. After successfully enduring the most restrictive aspects of the pandemic, the Library re-emerged with a new identity, most conspicuously seen in its new name: the Theodore Sedgwick Wright Library.

This multi-year period brought innumerable changes and opportunities for growth, which is the subject of this chapter. Many of these changes were already underway well before the pandemic, but the disruption accelerated them. The change can be grouped into three broad overlapping areas: 1) the Library's community role, 2) collections and services, and 3) staffing.[1]

This chapter will provide a critical reflection on the Library's local experience taking on a new identity in the midst of a pandemic, sharing lessons learned and new traditions established that may be of interest to other libraries reflecting on their community role, collections and services, and staffing.

The Library's Community Identity

Throughout the pandemic the Library operated within the context of the Seminary's mandates, as well as its research and curricular needs. In 2020, the Seminary shut down its physical campus and transitioned to online education, working from home, stringent health care guidelines, reduced budgets, cross-campus coordination, and an affirmation of the Library as an essential service, both in its physical and virtual forms. Throughout, the Library's role as a research and community site was continually defined and redefined in complex conversations with the administration. The result was a continual expansion of service in the most inclusive manner possible, all the while keeping the staff safe.

The Library Building as Campus Hub

The new library building was completed in 2013, replacing the 1956 Speer Library building after it proved inadequate for serving future goals. The modern, light-filled new building with ample public spaces gave the Library an enhanced profile in the life of the Seminary. For almost ten years, and during the first year of the pandemic, the new building would simply be called Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

As the newest and largest building on campus, bustling with people and activity, the Library had been central to campus life and learning, and it even served as the temporary site of almost every class for an academic year while the main classroom building on campus was being renovated. The Library served myriad purposes: people came to the Library to study, research, take seminars, consult with writing tutors, use digital labs, consult with experts, attend events, visit the cafe, find a quiet place for reflection, or just catch up with friends. In addition to serving as a campus resource, the Library was highly used by the local community, neighboring university students, and visiting scholars from across the globe.

The year 2020 was a remarkable year. The Seminary was in the midst of multi-faceted campus planning to align its vision and commitment to the future as a covenant community, where residential life and study were at the forefront. Phased long-term change to the campus footprint was discussed to support the vision. The Library was a participant in these conversations and was already well-positioned as the heart of campus.

Safety Protocols and Seminary Access

In early 2020 the Seminary administration watched closely as the global crisis began to unfold and a highly contagious and deadly virus spread to the United States. A campus emergency operation team was mobilized initially to plan for a two-week transition to off-campus work, life, and study. Ultimately, this short-term transition was followed by a longer-term campus closure along with a move to long-term remote work and study. It was assumed that planning would be for the short term to give time for the virus threat to be understood and managed. A defining characteristic of the Seminary

response was one of community, well-being, and care. Regular campus communications were distributed by the President's Office and then supplemented by personal messages from the president, which continued throughout the pandemic. Chapel services went virtual and people could join remotely to worship together. The Seminary steadfastly maintained a commitment to retaining staff, despite the economic challenges that the pandemic response produced.

As the ad-hoc emergency operations team first met, it strategized planning in tiers of response. One early point of reference for its work was the World Health Organization's (WHO) document on *Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19.* The team quickly drafted a prevention and response plan, including input by each campus department, which was built into the campus plan by a small working group with the larger ad-hoc group offering feedback. A core response team included the standing members of the campus group charged with ongoing emergency operations planning plus the Student Life and Academic Affairs departments. The plan was meant to be integrated with the campus emergency operations plan and address a future pandemic plan, not merely the current threat. This planning effort addressed three tiers:

- Tier I: This tier represented the prevention stage, where non-anxious communication and taking steps to hinder the spread of the virus were considered of paramount importance.
- Tier II: This tier considered what would happen if there were suspected or confirmed cases in the tri-state area impacting travel, gatherings, operations, etc.
- Tier III: This tier considered what would happen if there were suspected or confirmed cases within the local campus community.

For each of these tiers, department heads were tasked to think about: 1) what needs to be communicated to whom and by when? 2) What needs to be done, changed or halted, and until when? And 3) how will tier scenarios impact the community and departmental constituents?

At the Tier I stage in March 2020, communication was of paramount importance. It was necessary to quickly produce basic guidelines about processes such as handwashing and preparation (e.g., food, supplies, medication, basic needs). Communication audiences were broad and included students, family, colleagues, and the general public. Recognizing that the community was anxious, it was

noted that rapid communication about preventative measurements and safety protocols were needed. The campus facilities team set up hand sanitizing stations throughout the campus. Additional preventative measures included departments taking responsibility for wiping down all surfaces in their areas. The emergency team also debated whether to stop travel at this point. They discussed trips in progress and planned, as well as the timeframe for decision-making, risk assessment, and cost assessment. International travel was of particular concern. The Library instituted limited building access on March 12, 2020. Library doors were locked and only campus community members (students, faculty, and staff) could gain access via their campus ID cards. For a library that prides itself on open access to everyone, it was a difficult decision to implement this limited access.

On the afternoon of March 20, 2020, as the Library was closing for what was then thought to be two weeks, Library leadership sent a message of gratitude to the Library staff acknowledging that they had risen to the many challenges that came their way during this quickly planned and implemented transition. Library staff helped prepare to move the Library's service operations to an online environment so that the PTS community could continue their research and study endeavors. Library staff were creative in developing projects and approaches to work from home while maintaining communication with each other. With each of the ever-extending work-from-home developments, staff adapted remarkably well and used some of this time for extended training and collaboration. Leadership acknowledged that it was a challenging time and committed to move forward with support for each other as a community. Staff were encouraged to take time to rest and recharge.

The Information Technology (IT) department was an early and consistent key campus partner for the Library during the pandemic. Thanks to IT's quick action in mobilizing all available devices, staff went home with loaner laptops, which included VPN access to connect to desktops remotely for work and virtual meetings.

As the entire campus shut down, permission had to be secured from campus administration any time staff needed to return to campus to get to necessary resources to perform their work. Public service staff returned most frequently on a prescribed schedule to collect resources needed for reference and curbside book pickup. The cataloging team came to campus every three to four weeks to pick up new cataloging work. Mail deliveries for print collections had to be

curtailed at this time, which led to assorted book delivery issues and backlogs.

Throughout the pandemic, the Library was in touch with national organizations about emerging research and best practices on myriad pandemic matters. An early global concern involved safe handling of book surfaces as possible virus carriers, recognizing in those early days that there was not a full understanding of transmission. The Library administration relied on research developments from the Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) project funded and conducted by OCLC, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Battelle. A disaster listserv established by the National Institutes for Health for libraries ("Disaster Information Outreach by Librarians") was a regular source of information, as were other national library listservs (e.g., Atlantis, a list for religious studies and theological librarians and librarians of the American Library Association). The New Jersey State Library facilitated webinars with New Jersey state government at various times of pandemic developments and change, especially in relation to library openings, safety, public service, and available funding resources for libraries and their communities. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* was a regular source of information, including publications and webinars on conversations with campus and library leaders throughout the United States regarding pandemic practices, challenges, and resulting future changes (Diep 2020).

At the Tier II stage in late spring 2020, the Academic Affairs department, which includes the Library, quickly prepared to transition operations online to the web meeting software WebEx and course management system Brightspace. Training for students, faculty, and staff on these platforms and virtual academic activity commenced as soon as possible. The IT department quickly mobilized to make tools available to the community for the transition to offsite activity. The Library was positioned well to support the community through electronic collection resources and virtual reference and web chat. Library leaders re-considered the need to restrict the Library building to only the PTS community at this stage.

Also during Tier II in spring 2020, the Library extended collection item checkout dates as a practical measure. As long as everyone was offsite and items were not recalled for use, patrons could keep their books. The Library enlisted the assistance of Security to safely phase students into the building in a socially distanced manner so that students could address their collection and research needs. Graduating

master's degree students who remained on campus had an opportunity to come into the building and return books while doctoral students had the opportunity to schedule time in their dedicated study suite to retrieve items needed for longer-term study.

Despite the pressing circumstances and uncertainty, the Library was completely closed (building and services) for a relatively brief period of two months. In June 2020, the front parts of the library building—the cafe, open spaces, meeting rooms separated from library collections by a security gate—were converted to socially distanced quiet study spaces that ensured six-foot distances between all individuals. This action provided those students who remained in Princeton a place to retreat for quiet study. A scanner and copier were placed in this space as well to meet the self-serve needs of both faculty and students.

In the summer of 2020, the Library introduced curbside book pickup to its faculty, students, and staff. The Security team became an integral and valued partner in the Library's curbside book pickup service to augment available library staffing. Service was introduced conservatively first to faculty and then scaled up to students as the Library tweaked processes, allowing for an increase in capabilities and response to a higher volume of requests. By thinking through processes carefully and developing clear plans of action, the Library was able to add service capacity in a consistent manner without having to scale back any offered service throughout the pandemic.

As an open campus, with an international community, it was not possible to know at that time whether someone who had the virus might come to campus or use the Library. The Library needed to determine when to put restrictive access into place, noting that the building was used not only by students but also by contractors, temp agencies, external cleaning crew, and Library partners such as the on-site Internet Archive Regional Scanning Center, located in the lower level of the building. We considered that collections arrived from all over the world—from approval plans, standing orders, and blanket orders—to be added to the collections and from institutions around the region for digitization. Difficult decisions needed to be made about how to manage these high-volume incoming operations, all of which were impacted by the campus closure.

The Library was part of weekly campus emergency operations meetings to discuss its role in the ongoing campus response. There was spirited conversation about whether Library staff should remain home working when the Library was a vital campus resource to the

academic enterprise. The balance between staff health and safety and making resources available was an ongoing tension well into the pandemic. At each phase of the pandemic response, the Library made calculated efforts to provide collection services and resources while prioritizing staff health. The Library building and collections are very large, yet its staffing is considered lean in relation to its size. Without redundant staffing, where multiple personnel are assigned to service points or operational tasks, impacts caused by COVID-19, whether a risk of staff member infection or the need for staff to care for an infected loved one, could have jeopardized the Library's ability to offer services at any time. With this in mind, the Library administration negotiated to keep most staff at home and maintain remote services.

The Security (eventually redesignated as Public Safety) department was a very close ally to the Library throughout the pandemic, as all communication and related security clearances regarding the coming and going of staff who worked in the building was managed by that campus unit. Security made regular rounds of the interior and exterior of the building, ensuring that interior systems in the facility remained functioning and that the building remained locked at all times. Thanks to their daily rounds, several water-related system disasters were detected and addressed before collections were affected. Additional key valued campus partners for the Library were the Auxiliary and Facilities Services campus units. Auxiliary Services ensured that the building was disinfected according to the prescribed schedule and manner while Facilities staff built custom protective clear shields for the public service stations in preparation for the Library's limited reopening in the summer of 2021.

Early in the transition to remote work, instruction, and study, a campus Health and Safety Team was established and remained in place until 2023. This team, consisting of executives, campus operations leaders, and health professionals communicated regularly with state and local health authorities, the neighboring university, and the local public school system, and followed national guidance provided by the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control. Distancing and isolation guidelines were developed, and protocols were established for reporting and managing individual outbreaks. Once vaccines became available, the Seminary mandated that everyone (staff and students) was required to be vaccinated and the Health and Safety Team established protocols for reporting vaccinations. This team was crucial for Tiers II and III of emergency planning and management; they carried

a heavy load for the campus throughout the pandemic. Their faithful planning, consistent communication, and steadfast commitment to community well-being ensured that the PTS community remained well below virus records in the surrounding areas.

Communication and well-being were persistent threads at PTS. As the pandemic worsened, the prioritization of community, along with the balance of personal safety, staff development, and service, reminded staff and students alike that all are here to help one another. As staff meetings went remote (via WebEx), people looked for ways to connect beyond virtual face-to-face meetings. For example, staff became creative with virtual coffee breaks over WebEx and small group team-building outings, such as socially distanced outdoor ice cream breaks. Additionally, staff participated in synchronous planned group social activities that they carried out individually (e.g., walking the beach in separate seaside towns, but at the same time). People were reminded, in this isolating and difficult time, that they were part of a community and they created paths to maintain that connection virtually.

In the fall semester of 2021, the Wright Library, as it had been named, was positioned to open to the entire campus community on swipe card access. Wright Library also began accepting applications for temporary access for special external visitors. On March 14, 2022, about two years after campus transitioned to remote learning, key card access was lifted and the Wright Library reopened fully to everyone without restriction. The pandemic's effect resulted in some lingering Library challenges, including reduced reliance on print material, greater expectation that materials will be available digitally (especially for courses), less foot traffic, and shorter hours. The one reversal that the Library has seen in the full year of unrestricted access is that the Library is becoming populous with patrons and campus activity once again.

Collections and Public Services Identity in Transition

In the second area of major impact, Collections and Public Services, the Library embraced a new integrated library system, new forms of content delivery including curbside pickup and scan-on-demand, and a renewed commitment to expanded digital access to meet the needs of researchers and students who were suddenly learning

and working remotely. For a time, most of the Library's print book shipments were interrupted. Focus shifted to digital content delivery, which included new digital models such as Evidenced-Based Acquisition and Controlled Digital Lending with new and established partners like HathiTrust and the Internet Archive. Increased digital access made the Library's collections more pandemic-proof and flexible.

The Library has historically held a rich legacy print collection, totaling approximately 660,000 print monograph volumes in early 2020. The Collection Development Policy continues to prioritize print over digital access for books, primarily for three reasons: publishing models, the historic focus on the seminary's residential community, and researcher preference. The Library's goal of collecting research-level theological literature necessitates that it collects in print since it is impossible to collect as widely in digital format with so much literature still published only in print. The Seminary has also gone against the trends of other theological seminaries to place a greater emphasis on its residential community. This means that a print collection has served the community well, historically. Finally, again and again, researchers in the fields served by the Library have consistently stated a preference for print, at least for their own research needs; they are "print bound," as they have said. When the staff left for "two weeks" in March 2020, there was no thought yet that this legacy print collection would soon be largely inaccessible to the local community, and that its loss would be felt especially acutely.

Shifting Collection Strategies to Meet Emerging Needs

The Library orders the bulk of its print books through approval plans. Vendors select and send titles on the basis of an approval profile developed by the Collection Development Librarian using certain criteria, including publisher type, subject parameters, special collecting interests, format, collection level, budget, language, and genre. For certain book series, the Library places standing orders, meaning that each new publication within that series will be sent automatically without the Library's individual approval for each volume. In a few instances, the Library initiates blanket orders, meaning that all titles from a specific publisher or vendor will be sent automatically. As examples, the Library has blanket orders established with publishers such as Orbis Books, WJK Press, Fortress Press, and

Wipf and Stock, and with vendors like Hogarth, which specializes in African materials.

In early 2020, due to budgetary restraints, working from home, and other disruptions caused by the pandemic, the approval plans, the primary source of book acquisition, were suspended. In some instances, these books were selected and held by the vendors; in others, the vendors kept track of what they would have sent so decisions could be made at a later point; and in still other instances, no selection took place during the period when the approval plans were inoperative.

Softening this blow somewhat was the increased licensing of digital resources in the years leading up to the pandemic. As late as 2015, there was only minimal access to ebooks at Princeton Theological Seminary, with a few collections purchased to supplement the print collection. Longstanding collecting strategies focused on print books over e-books and discouraged the acquisition of e-books if the print format was already held for those titles. This intentional desire reduced redundancy in the collection and stretched the budget by acquiring titles in only one format. Thankfully, in the years leading up to the pandemic, large e-book collections were added as the budget allowed, even if these additions duplicated what was available in print. The ability to search full text and to access these titles from off-site, coupled with the steep discounts for already owning the content in print, made the acquisition of these collections sensible. Another major decision made before the pandemic that lessened the negative side effects of decreased access to the physical library collection was PTS's participation in Evidence-Based Acquisition (EBA) programs. EBA programs generally allow an institution to have access to a full catalog of e-books for an upfront deposit. Access is provided for a full calendar year and then, at the end of the year, a library can use that deposit to purchase titles (usually the most frequently used) in perpetuity. In 2020, PTS was already participating in EBA programs with Wiley, Bloomsbury, Project MUSE, and Brill. In fact, PTS was Brill's first EBA partner, and this partnership is still a valued resource for our community.

In January 2019, the Library System Task Force, an internal group composed of Library staff members, began investigating a new integrated library system (ILS) as its contract with Voyager was set to expire. By July 2019, the Task Force unanimously recommended Innovative's ILS Sierra. While most other academic libraries were transitioning to Alma, Sierra promised to be easier to implement and

manage the collections. The go-live date was June 2020, when the Library was still physically closed to its local researchers. As it happened, the pandemic allowed the Library to have a soft launch of the ILS where circulation staff were able to interact with the system apart from in-person patrons, which decreased stress and pressure for a perfectly functional ILS.

New Technologies and Partnerships Expand Accessibility: ILS, HathiTrust's ETAS, Internet Archive's CDL

The Library had been planning to join HathiTrust for some time as part of its overall collection development strategy and commitment to digital preservation, as well as access. This strategy held the Library in good stead during the pandemic. By October 2020, the Library received requests from faculty about access to HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS). By November 2020, PTS was a member. ETAS allowed the Library to gain digital access to all digitized titles in HathiTrust that the Library already owned in print. This new membership meant that 111,000 in-copyright works were "unlocked" and suddenly made available digitally to our researchers. The Library leveraged the investment made in the print collection to make digital access available. While access increased tremendously, there were also unintended consequences. The system was meant to operate on an owned-to-loaned ratio, where digital access was only granted for titles owned by the Library and only if the Library agreed to remove them from circulation. Therefore, patrons could not have access to both the print and the digital formats simultaneously. Since some patrons already had books checked out from before the pandemic and others checked out books through curbside pickup, the Library was legally obligated to recall any books that were currently checked out that could be accessed through HathiTrust. Despite these hiccups, from November 2020 through April 2021, 1,450 books were used: almost 1,000 by students, 150 by faculty, 120 by administrators, 100 by alumni, 50 by staff, and 30 by adjunct faculty.

Emergency Temporary Access ended on June 11, 2021, in time for the Library to reopen. The Library continues to partner with HathiTrust by contributing to its growing digital library with books scanned by the Seminary. More than 40,000 public domain titles remain available in the catalog via the link "Connect to HathiTrust

Digital Library"—a positive lingering legacy of the emergency program.

In addition to HathiTrust's ETAS, the Library expanded its title offering through the Internet Archive's Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) program. The Library began an in-house CDL program in 2019 in expansion of a long-standing partnership with Internet Archive, which includes a regional scanning center located on-site. This ongoing partnership has resulted in the digitization of tens of thousands of out-of-copyright books and bound periodicals from the Library's collection, all freely available for searching and reading through the Library's Theological Commons website at *https://commons.ptsem.edu* as well as through the Internet Archive at *https://archive.org/details/Princeton*. While out-of-copyright materials from the Library's collection are digitized in partnership with Internet Archive and posted in Theological Commons, and newer digital publications are licensed through the publisher or vendor when possible, CDL provided digital access to texts that fell between those two periods. During the pandemic shutdown, the Library had already digitized and made accessible more than 5,000 books published between 1927 and 1989 following certain criteria:

1. Books must be published in the United States.
2. Books must be non-fiction and of a scholarly character, e.g., academic monograph, edited volume of academic essays, biblical commentary. No fiction or poetry will be included.
3. Wright Library must own multiple copies of the book.
4. For every digital version of a book circulating under CDL, the physical copy of that book will be taken out of circulation and stored securely such that users will not have access to it.

By the end of 2023, more than 8,000 books have been added to the CDL program. The Library also employs a Takedown Policy, should rights holders prefer that the Library not lend their books through CDL.

Reconfiguring (Again and Again) Public Services: Circulation, Reference, Reserves, ILL

In spring 2020, Seminary instruction switched almost immediately from in-person to online. This abrupt transition dramatically impacted traditional services. The Reference and Circulation Desks sat empty, and like most other libraries, the Library deactivated ILL service. Although the Seminary had reciprocal borrowing privileges with nearby libraries, including Princeton University, access to those physical collections was also suspended. No physical reserves were kept behind the Circulation Desk. Faculty were asked to select course readings from electronic resources already in the catalog or selections that could easily be scanned and added to the learning management system, Brightspace.

The Reference Desk debuted a chat service via the commercial platform LibraryH3lp. The hope was that LibraryH3lp could supplement the reference services available through phone and e-mail. Ultimately, the Library's experience throughout the chat pilot program is that it did not serve the needs of our community, as most reference questions are quite in-depth and needed a proper, lengthy, in-person reference interview.

The Library juggled multiple concerns when trying to determine how and when to roll out services aimed to increase public services. Expanding services needed to be done in coordination with Library staff, the Seminary's Health and Safety Team, and the Security/Public Safety department. There was a desire to ensure that researchers had access to the materials they needed, but concerns arose about the virus and the lack of information available about how best to protect against it. Protective gear, masks, gloves, and sanitizer were ordered, and Circulation and Reference staff were on-site to prepare for the new services. The Library offered curbside services on June 1, 2020, to current faculty and PhD students, focusing on those patron groups who most needed research materials for the summer months. In designing new curbside workflows, Library staff wanted to make sure they could meet the demand without scaling back in the future or unnecessarily endangering the health of staff or patrons. Doctoral students and faculty submitted book requests, circulation staff would pull and process them, and the Seminary's Public Safety team would meet the requesting faculty and doctoral students at the loading dock behind the Library with the books. In March 2021, the

Library also implemented scanning services as an additional way of making resources available to faculty and students.

In July 2021, the Library reopened its doors only to the current Seminary community, students, faculty, and staff. Eventually, an application process was created to allow visiting scholars to request special permission to access the Library. One of the biggest challenges at this time was how to restrict access to authorized people. The exterior doors of the Library were programmed for card swipe access, which should have only permitted authorized users, but at times the doors would not shut fully behind the person entering, or the door might actually be held (likely out of politeness) for someone to enter. A secondary ID check was implemented at the Circulation desk where faculty and students needed to show their seminary ID to gain further access into the building. While it was necessary that every ID be checked every time to ensure fairness, this requirement became a point of tension when it was clear that both the Library staff member and the faculty or student knew each other. Although tempting to relax this requirement, doing so would mean that this policy would be unevenly enforced.

The Evolving Identity of the Library Staff

The third area of major impact on the Library during this period was a sweeping changeover in staffing. From late 2019 and throughout the pandemic, three factors caused a dramatic change to Library staffing: 1) a new campus-wide incentivized retirement program; 2) the filling of key vacancies; and 3) the urgent creation of new positions necessitated by pandemic workflows. Ultimately, over half of the Library's present staff was hired during the 2020-2022 period. By late 2022, the Library staff emerged with a wholly different composition and group identity. The physical and conceptual shape of the Library's work also changed with new positions and new personalities added to the team. Finally, the pandemic period also provided the Library Management Team with important insights in the areas of onboarding, training, and acculturation enriched by the experiences and perspectives of new staff members.

Changes to the Library Staff

The first significant change to staffing began just prior to the pandemic, when the Seminary created a new incentivized early retirement program across campus, ultimately leading to vacancies in key roles among the Library's approximately 16 positions. Five long-serving members of the Library's staff retired in mid-to-late 2019 as part of the program, with another two staff members resigning to move to positions in other organizations that year. Even while honoring and celebrating the contributions of departing colleagues, remaining staff began to wrestle with the extent of this sizable loss: decades of unparalleled service, institutional knowledge of the collections and generations of patrons, and an understanding of the origins and deeper meaning of idiosyncratic local practices. Saying goodbye to this group of talented, dedicated professionals in late 2019 underscored one reality: no new hire, however wonderful, is a replacement.

By the time the pandemic began to impact daily life in New Jersey in March 2020, about half of the vacated positions remained open, including positions in critical Public Services areas like Reference and Special Collections. Like many other institutions attempting to continue providing service in an uncertain future (Atla 2020), the Seminary initially implemented a partial hiring freeze before transitioning to a new model of position evaluation, approval, and posting. This new review process was undoubtedly financially prudent, but it did slow the filling of key vacancies in a dramatically reduced staff in the early stages of the pandemic just as the implementation of work-from-home practices and new expectations for accessing the Library skyrocketed.

Pandemic service – curbside pickup, responsive cleaning and isolation protocols, the transition to fully remote reference, and the increase to digital content – all helped highlight the value of Library staff and services to students, faculty, and the administration in very tangible ways. This recognition of value ultimately allowed the Library to continue hiring replacements for key roles and, in some cases, to create new positions to meet demand. Ultimately, nine staff members were hired during this period, including crucial positions in Public Services, Cataloging, and Special Collections and Archives. Some of these new staff members needed to be both interviewed and onboarded remotely. They then acclimated to the Seminary culture and performed work remotely which had traditionally been done

on-site. Finally, some staff were hired specifically to offer essential services to the Seminary community while the physical library space remained closed.

The Physical and Conceptual Shape of Library Work

All personnel, new and long-serving, had to reimagine their roles throughout 2020-2022, adjusting the shape, performance, and delivery of their services and output as public health and safety requirements continued to shift rapidly at the national, state, and institutional levels. This time also created an environment that was open to change, innovation, and experimentation, sometimes accelerating the adoption of pre-pandemic workplace trends. During the pandemic, the Library was able to explore several pre-pandemic workplace issues impacting the physical and conceptual shape of work broadly, including remote and hybrid work models, the sustainable design of and ongoing service reliance on part-time positions, and the growing attention to mental health in the workplace.

Prior to the pandemic, the Library had no formal remote or hybrid work options for staff. Culturally, the Seminary has always highly prized its commitment to residential theological education and community building. Historically, this commitment was embodied by a visible and engaged on-site faculty and staff presence across campus. The realities of the pandemic challenged the Seminary to reimagine community, engagement, teaching, learning, and working in ways it had never explored before – transitioning quickly to remote/hybrid learning for faculty and students and mandatory remote/hybrid work models for most staff (Hinchliffe and Wolff-Eisenberg 2020).

Like many academic and theological librarians during this period, Library staff members readily adapted to remote/hybrid work through the rapid redesign of individual and departmental workflows and services, the development of new processes to meet new needs, and the acquisition of improved project management and technology skills. By the time the Library fully reopened in mid-2021, the staff had become more sophisticated in its collective ability to organize work for both on-site and remote settings, increasing efficiency overall to meet continuing, post-pandemic demand for multimodal services (De Groote and Scoulas 2021). The Library simply works differently now.

The sustainable design of part-time positions is another issue that Library staff explored during the pandemic. From November 2020 through August 2022, the Library created three new part-time staff roles in Circulation to meet the increased demands on public services. While these part-time roles have been crucial to keeping the Library staffed for essential services, the turnover of part-time staff has been significant – five people have occupied the three new part-time roles to date. Of the original three part-time hires, one moved to another full-time position in the Library and two have left for full-time positions or positions offering more hours in other institutions. This challenge to retain employees suggests that potential applicants and new staff are looking for different models beyond traditional part-time arrangements to meet their own personal or professional needs and expectations (McClure 2021). This pattern reflects wider trends in the higher education workforce; even as post-pandemic staffing is restored to pre-pandemic levels, the challenges of shaping meaningful positions to eliminate employee-retention problems – from engagement to burnout to attractive and sustainable salary levels – remain (June 2022). The Library is now reviewing the sustainability and meaningful design of future part-time positions.

Finally, the Library and the Seminary are giving new levels of attention to the important issue of mental health in the workplace – one strong imprint from the pandemic that seems to have impacted most sectors. The Seminary is grappling with ways to provide additional support and services to its faculty and staff, from lectures, workshops, and additional health benefits encouraging work-life balance and stress reduction. Librarianship – and theological librarianship in particular – with its long history of vocational calling, is a field that will be served well by this attention. The Conversation Group Discussion "Continuing the Conversation: Reflecting on Our Pandemic Experiences" at Atla Annual 2022 asked participants what they are working on now. Some described a need to focus on "morale, healing, and building community" (Welsh et al. 2022, 120-125). The spate of professional literature on both librarian burnout and the issue of mental health across higher education since 2020 testifies to increased attention to this issue in the academy. The literature also makes clear that this is work of shared responsibility. Modern, responsive organizations are responsible for designing jobs, work cultures, and practices that promote and protect healthy staff engagement. Staff members are individually responsible for undertaking

self-care practices that ensure both their joy and their job readiness (Holm, Guimaraes, and Marcano 2022).

Lessons Learned: Employment Communication and Acculturation

The pandemic period also provided the Library with three particularly important lessons learned alongside its new staff members in the areas of communication regarding hiring, onboarding, training processes, new acculturation challenges, and the value of immersive space for new staff members.

Centralizing and clarifying communication around the employment experience as a whole, including interviewing, onboarding, training, and campus acculturation, is one area that the Library and its parent seminary need to improve. The experiences of new staff members hired during the pandemic highlight pre-existing gaps in communication and processes. New staff members each had slightly different experiences, but most used terms like "confusion" and "chaos" to describe communication during both the pre- and post-hire periods. New staff struggled to get information about benefits, start dates, the location of documentation and policies, technology needs, and a wider sense of understanding the community. Two new hires moved from out of state to New Jersey during the height of the pandemic, when unclear communication and a complex and shifting public health situation impacted start dates, move dates, house sales, and the local real estate search. Several new employees mentioned the potential value of a new (not yet existent) centralized human resources system to improve the communications gaps and help potential and new staff get a better, more cohesive sense of Library and Seminary identity from first contact.

The Library also faced acculturation challenges for new staff, particularly as new staff's exposure to existing staff, the Library's collections, and the PTS campus were physically limited. Pandemic restrictions prevented two new staff members from coming on-site until several months after their start date. All new staff were enthusiastic about the practical value of holding initial interviews via web conferencing as an efficient preliminary introduction between the applicant and the Library. Most new staff agreed that it is also ideal for both parties to host final interviews on-site when possible; candidates can be exposed more directly to both the campus culture and the collections, and the Library can more easily determine if

a candidate's online presentation and energy matches their on-site personality. New staff are hugely enthusiastic about the hybrid work model, with several noting that hybrid options were an essential feature in their job search. Still, all recognize that campus hybridity has made integration into the Library and wider campus culture slower. Even by early 2023, some Library staff members had still never been in the same room with each other, some had never been in many buildings on campus, and some had only been able to attend a small number of wider Seminary events. While the Library staff identity has changed, it is still learning who it is now.

One unexpected and positive result of this period has been a rediscovery of the value of sustained immersion for new staff. Pandemic restrictions offered many new staff members an extended, highly focused time of exploration at the beginning of their tenure. New staff often received a huge amount of valuable solo training time with new supervisors, building relationships and job understanding. They also reported the enduring value of the opportunity to spend months extensively exploring the collections, buildings, services, and policies in a silent building. One new staff member described how transitioning back on-site to a partially-opened library building allowed her to make intellectual and practical connections with the physical collection following the remote period where, she said, the "collection was still just an abstraction." New staff also prized the opportunity to dig deep into policies, workflows, documentation, and standards relating to their new position, identifying it as both an ideal situation for a new employee but also a luxury that the pressures of the modern work world does not easily allow. The Library is challenged to explore how it can replicate this immersive experience going forward, post-pandemic, structuring time and space for new staff members to think, read, and train deeply (Newport 2016) at the start of a new role.

A New, Post-Pandemic Identity

This period of intense collection and service disruption, but also innovation, was only made possible through the flexibility and commitment of the Library's staff. Throughout the pandemic, pressure remained on the Library to provide access not only to its core campus community but also to community neighbors and scholars

who made regular pleas for access to specific collections needed for their research. This was an ongoing and delicate issue. As a research library, providing access and expertise is at the heart of the mission. Yet the balance of mission in concert with a closed campus, staff well-being, and insufficient resources to manage a large building during a pandemic was a difficult matter. The Library building and collections behind the security gates remained closed to the Seminary community until the start of the summer session in 2021. That summer, the Library piloted return-to-building use with faculty and doctoral students who have their own dedicated suite in the building with personal study spaces and offices, and an assortment of rooms to meet specific research, personal, technology, and collaboration needs.

In the spring of 2021, in concert with the Board of Trustees meeting and alumni reunion, the Library was named the Theodore Sedgwick Wright Library after the Seminary's first African American graduate. Wright was a member of the class of 1828, who became a prominent abolitionist, pastor, and preacher. The naming of the Library felt like the culmination of an identity shift that was happening throughout the pandemic.

The Wright Library was formally dedicated on October 13, 2021, with a rich program of speakers referencing history and hope for the future. The dedication's event program included this prayer:

> "We give thanks to God for the examples of courageous faith that Wright demonstrated in the midst of perilous times. Each time we enter this building that is essential to our scholarly endeavors, let us reflect upon the grace and power granted to Wright and find strength and hope knowing that we serve an impartial God who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

When Wright Library fully reopened to the public on March 14, 2022, a full two years after its doors first closed, it had a new name, a new ILS, new access models, new policies and procedures, new relationships with existing campus partners, and many new staff members. The campus looked forward to a bright future of well-planned change, which, for the Wright Library, included extensive experience in remote onboarding of new staff, new ways of working, and different collection development practices, including enhancing digital collection purchases, access, and partnerships. While Borges's hope has yet to be fully realized, Wright Library is perhaps a little closer to

paradise than it was at the start of the pandemic, and certainly much closer than it was during the pandemic.

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Notes

1   The Library's Special Collections will only be mentioned briefly; for a full treatment of the department during this time, please see Head of Special Collections Brian Shetler's chapter in this volume, "The Changing Realities of Special Collections and Archives: Facing the Future with Confidence and Confusion."

Stranger in a Strange Land at a Strange Time

ROBERT BURGESS

*T*he title of this chapter takes its inspiration from Exodus 2:22 when Moses gives his son the name Gershom, which translates as "Stranger in a Strange Land" in the King James Version. Moses described himself as a stranger in a strange land because he went from being an adopted prince in Egypt to a shepherd in Midian. My addition of "at a strange time" refers to the time period beginning when the COVID-19 pandemic started to ravage the world.

This chapter will focus on my personal experiences starting a position at a new institution that was seeking to expand its electronic holdings and serve students in challenging times. The chapter begins with my journey of how I, the stranger, came to a strange land, Mississippi College near Jackson, MS, during a strange time, the COVID-19 pandemic. This account, spanning from March 2020 to May 2022, focuses on my personal journey of losing my job at one institution because of the pandemic and moving to a job created

because of the pandemic at a different institution. I will also detail how the new institution was determined to embrace the challenges and transitions of working under COVID-19 restrictions. Included are my recollections of what serving and engaging with patrons during the height of COVID-19 looked like. I present the difficulties of how to serve and engage patrons when there is physical distance and a lack of gatherings. This account covers both my feelings and memories from these unprecedented times.

Exile

In March of 2020, I received an email from the provost of the Texan seminary where I worked. He asked for a meeting with me and our library dean on how we would serve students during the pandemic. However, when I arrived, I found that the meeting had nothing to do with serving students during COVID-19. He started off by saying how the future was uncertain because of COVID-19. He went on to say that since students had just been sent home for the semester, they were not going to be coming into the Library. We had several hundred students who were still living on campus, but they would not be gathering anywhere on campus due to the lockdown. Since students were not going to come into the Library, the rest of the Library staff and I were not needed for the time being. He continued to mention how challenging things were in the world. The provost spoke at length about how the pandemic had personally affected him because he would not be able to buy a boat or go see a baseball game. He said that at the end of March, I would be placed on furlough. He gave no end date for the furlough.

This meeting occurred without a representative from Human Resources (HR), and, about a week later, I called the HR department to clarify some things regarding the furlough. They told me that I was not being put on furlough and had been terminated. Not only had the provost fired me and the other Library staff, but he could not even bring himself to say that he fired us. Not only were the Library staff treated like this, but dozens of other workers on campus were also fired because of the pandemic. I was fired within a week of Texas being placed on lockdown.

I was devastated. I served as the Digital Resources Librarian at this institution for nearly six years. The school brought me there

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to help them add and manage online resources. I was instrumental in modernizing the Library and enhancing electronic resources. During my tenure at this institution, I implemented a discovery system, acquired hundreds of thousands of e-books, spearheaded the embedded and personal librarianship initiative, and increased services to distance and online students. It was primarily because of my work that students were able to easily access online materials as higher education shifted to remote platforms. It hurt deeply to know that my years of service meant absolutely nothing. It was terrifying to think that a Christian institution to which I had given so much of my time and skills left me without a salary and health care while this virus was ravaging the world. I felt used and easily disposed of by this school. According to the provost, who had never once been to the Library, the best thing that I could do for the school that I loved and served diligently was to no longer work there. There was very little consideration as to how students were going to get the help that they needed without a Digital Resources Librarian.

On social media and in the news, I kept seeing stories about how various libraries were serving students during the pandemic. However, our institution decided that libraries and librarians were not essential during the pandemic. The Seminary had only kept the library dean. It was up to him and the couple of student workers that he was allowed to keep to pull books for students that were still on campus as well as attending to the many copy and scan requests that Seminary students desperately needed. Instead of continuing to serve the students that I had dedicated my career to, I was cut off from that community entirely.

I spent the first few months of COVID-19 trying to navigate unemployment benefits and working part-time at Walmart. I remember contacting a staff member at Atla in tears about what happened and how much hurt I felt. I remember meeting on Zoom for a Board of Directors meeting for another organization and feeling embarrassed that I was let go. I felt betrayed by both my school and my profession. I questioned the path, degrees, and years of professional development that had left me with nothing. Upon learning that it was a true termination, I started looking for more opportunities. Finding another position proved difficult as many library jobs that were posted right before the pandemic had closed or were removed because of the challenges caused by the pandemic. I eventually found a job that was posted after the pandemic started that was a great fit for me.

A New Change

I received an opportunity to become the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian at Mississippi College (MC) at the Leland Speed Library. This was a new position that was created because of the pandemic. They were seeking an experienced librarian to manage and expand their electronic holdings. They realized they needed this librarian because they wanted to meet the needs of students who would be remote and online, and to serve the online needs of their on-campus students. The skills that I acquired in my previous job prepared me for this new opportunity at MC. MC decided to emphasize electronic resources because they knew that COVID-19 had deeply impacted education. They understood that distance and online education would likely increase over the years. These goals were in direct opposition to the route the Seminary that I had been working for had chosen to take. Everything I did and advocated for at my previous school were skills and values that MC most hoped for in their candidate.

Much like Moses, I also felt like a stranger, though my transition was not quite as dramatic as Moses's. MC is a prestigious institution and the largest private school in the state. The previous college where I worked was mostly a graduate school with a small college that issued a few undergraduate degrees. MC is primarily a residential, four-year university with several undergraduate degrees, a graduate school, a physician assistant school, and a law school. The total student body of MC numbers around four thousand students. Although MC is a Baptist school, the same denomination as schools where I worked in the past, I was in very unfamiliar territory. I had not been in a working environment that was mostly residential undergrad since I was in library school. While I still felt a lot of pain from my previous institution, I was excited to start my new career. However, not only was I in a strange land, I was there during a strange time; no librarian currently living in America had ever dealt with serving patrons during a pandemic.

By the time I arrived at MC in August 2020, the Library staff was preparing to reopen the building to the students. They had been mostly closed to students since the pandemic began – closed entirely for the last couple of months of the spring 2020 semester, and open only a few days a week during the summer. In order to open fully and be compliant with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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(CDC) recommendations, we had to make the Library safe for our students.

The theme of the 2020-2021 academic year from MC administration was "Strong and Courageous," which derived from Joshua 1:9. This theme of being strong and courageous was often repeated throughout the semester in order to encourage the community to keep pressing on during difficult and uncertain times. The words "Strong and Courageous" were painted into a mural in the student center, and were branded on hand sanitizing stations that were set up throughout the campus. "Strong and Courageous" were also words constantly used in emails and video communication from the president.

I was thankful to be in a solid Christian environment during this time. MC had a mix of trust in the Lord and respect for science. During these difficult times, administrators showed how much the MC environment was impacted by their dedication to the Lord, and they sought to be safe in how they handled campus operations. Since MC is a school that is strong in medical science, our administration took multiple precautions to ensure the safety of the community. We would get weekly emails from our COVID-19 coordinator who would inform us of our case count on campus and give encouragement during troubling times. These emails from the coordinator were heartfelt and devotional. They included tips on being physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic. She also sometimes included humorous YouTube videos to cheer up the faculty and staff. In addition, MC's president occasionally sent emails filled with encouragement. At the same time, administrators made an effort to inform themselves about the seriousness and the risks of COVID-19. We had multiple task forces comprised of medical faculty who advised the administration for a year and a half. Grounded in their strong understanding of science, they took steps to make sure everyone was safe. The school encouraged everyone to get vaccinated. MC even offered the vaccine and boosters on campus. It was comforting to be at an institution that simultaneously cared for my well-being both spiritually, by expressing deeply committed Christian care for the community, and physically, by staying abreast of the science surrounding COVID-19.

The pandemic definitely had shaken up my world. It temporarily caused me to lose faith in my chosen profession. It caused me to be disconnected from a Seminary in which I was deeply invested and entrenched. I both lived and worked at the Seminary. So much of my social life revolved around the people I knew at the school. Being let

go deeply wounded me. However, MC provided a place where I could heal from those hurts. MC was concerned about the pandemic but was a place where fear had not taken over. I came to work feeling "strong and courageous." MC is a place that has filled me with peace and confidence. This is an institution that carefully watched over its people during a difficult time.

Impact of COVID-19 on Library Services

COVID-19 presented many challenges for the Library staff at Mississippi College. Although it was great being a part of this new community, I found it difficult to connect with that community because of all the pandemic restrictions in place. These mandates also made it difficult for Library staff to serve patrons during this time. Although the new dynamics at MC proved to be problematic, we were able to meet those challenges to ensure that students were safe from the virus as well as receiving library services and resources.

At the Speed Library, we sought to make our students strong and courageous by giving them the confidence that we were doing everything necessary to protect them against the virus. There were many safety measures that we put into place. We had a mask mandate throughout campus. In fact, MC went beyond the CDC recommendations; our school required masks when you walked outdoors. The only places where faculty, staff, and students could have their masks off were in offices, dorm rooms, and designated eating places. Our president could routinely be seen driving around campus on his golf cart wearing his own mask to remind students to keep their masks on. He even had a mask made to put on the front of his presidential cart to further emphasize the need for wearing masks. While I helped enforce and model good masking habits, one of the most difficult hurdles I faced was learning how to make purposeful connections with my new students and patrons despite the alienating look of masks.

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Library had one entrance and one exit whereas before the pandemic, there were two main doors where patrons could either enter or exit. Before entering the Library, patrons would have to scan their cards. Previously, entry by card access only occurred during the evening. Card access restrictions also meant that we were closed to all non-MC people from the community. Once patrons were greeted by a Library worker who was

stationed at a desk in the foyer, they showed the worker an app that verified they were free of COVID symptoms. If they had trouble with the app, the worker would have the patron fill out a symptom form and take their temperature. This process was maintained for a year. In addition, a clear physical barrier was installed at the circulation desk for further protection against the virus. This barrier is similar to the ones found in a grocery store or a bank.

We implemented several other measures to protect students and staff in the Library. Several hand sanitizing stations were placed in the building. Plastic signs were placed on all tables indicating the table had recently been cleaned or was in need of being sanitized. The signs instructed students to flip the sign over after they were done using it. Library staff would walk the building hourly to wipe down the tables that had been used. Once the tables were wiped down, the staff would turn the sign over to indicate that the table had been cleaned.

One requirement that made Library staff unpopular was monitoring students during the pandemic. Making sure students were wearing masks in the library became a very laborious task. Throughout each day, twice an hour, two members of our Library staff would walk through the Library to enforce mask compliance and social distancing guidelines. When the pandemic started, we were asked to report the names of students who did not comply with the mask mandate to the Dean of Students and ask them to leave the building. This naturally upset students, and quite honestly it upset the Library staff because it put us in awkward and often adversarial situations. This also deeply impacted my ability to make positive connections with students because we were seen more as "mask police" than Librarians offering services to patrons. In addition to us acting as "mask police," the Library actually contained real, off-duty police officers who would assist the night supervisors with mask compliance in the evening.

Before the fall 2020 semester started, we began to rearrange the study spaces in the Library. We had to remove a lot of chairs, changing the number of seats available to patrons at each table. We placed one chair at our shorter tables, which usually sat two to four people, and we placed only two chairs at our longer tables, which normally sat four to six people. We also limited the number of people who were allowed in study rooms. Most of our study rooms fit six to eight people. However, we limited the rooms to an occupancy of two to four people depending on the size of the room. Due to the changes

and restrictions present in the Library, our building lost its status of being a place of community. Instead, it became another place where students were in isolation. Our building was quiet and no longer a place where groups of friends would meet up. In addition, our coffee shop had remained closed from the time students were sent home in March 2020 and during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Although the theme on campus for 2020-2021 was from the book of Joshua, at times it felt like we were in the book of Judges. The mask requirements at other places on the MC campus were not as closely monitored as our building was, so it felt like many were doing "what was right in their own eye." MC even made a video to address how some students had become lax in wearing their masks. It seemed that many students were not willing to wear a mask or were tired of wearing them. It was discouraging to know that other places on campus were not adhering to guidelines at MC, and, in the perception of many students, the Library and its Librarians were seen negatively. I remember reviewing comments made on pictures as well as in our personal messages on Instagram about how harsh the Library was during this time.

During the summer of 2021, we did get a reprieve from the mask mandate. We were finally able to go outside our offices without wearing them. The Library celebrated over social media through posted videos of us ripping down Library mask signage and pictures of Library staff stomping on masks. We started adding more seating to the Library and dropped the entrance requirement, allowing students to use both entrances into the building once again. Our Archivist sent out an email to the whole campus to ask for masks, signs, and other artifacts that people wanted to donate to the Archives to document and preserve the COVID-19 impact on MC. Campus dining even decided to re-open the coffee shop in the Library, which excited many students. Life on campus seemed to have returned to normal. Future events were planned throughout the school and, after a year break, athletics were fully back. Going into the fall 2021 semester, the school had changed its theme. The "Strong and Courageous" mural was replaced with "Rise Up," which was taken from Nehemiah 2. However, this respite from masks was short-lived.

Students, staff, and faculty were asked once again to wear masks outside their offices to help ensure the health and safety on campus at the beginning of fall 2021 because of rising cases throughout our area. Although we were no longer monitoring the Library like before, and we did not require limited seating, it was still difficult

to go back to the way things were before the summer. We thought that since many people had been vaccinated and restrictions had been lifted, we could finally serve our students without any caution about the pandemic. It seemed like our hopes of having the Library become an engaging space again were over. However, a few days before Homecoming 2021, MC lifted the mask mandate for the final time. Since that time, the school slowly started to return to the way things were before the pandemic. MC would later experience its first "normal year" unhindered by COVID-19 in the 2022-2023 school year. The administration continued to incorporate the theme "Rise Up" by adopting the phrase "Here you Rise" in their promotional materials, and they have continued to use the terms "rise," "rising," and "arise" in various media campaigns and educational initiatives.

The pandemic gave us new opportunities to expand our Library services in different ways. Since we had a desire to expand our online holdings, I decided to add public domain e-book sites to our database list. In addition, I further utilized our LibAnswers tools. I created a library chat box from Springshare that appeared on our website and within our EBSCO databases. The chat box enabled synchronous chatting whenever a librarian would log in to the system at their desk. If they were not logged in, the LibAnswers box would show up for students to submit questions to be answered later. Although the synchronous chat service does not get used as often as I hoped, we have had several students submit questions through Ask-A-Librarian on LibAnswers. In addition, I made sure to add our text-a-librarian number to our webpage. In the 2020-2021 academic year, we received 30 synchronous chat questions and in the 2021-2022 academic year, we experienced a slight drop to 23 synchronous chat questions. Over the years, with the Ask-A-Librarian tool, we asynchronously answered:

- 180 questions in 2018-2019
- 157 questions in 2019-2020
- 127 questions in 2020-2021
- 72 questions in 2021-2022

Through our text a librarian service, we answered:

- 100 text questions in 2018-2019
- 353 questions in 2019-2020
- 284 questions in 2020-2021
- 225 questions in 2021-2022

We seem to have the most overall success with students using our texting service more than the synchronous chat and asynchronous Ask-A-Librarian services.

As the Electronic and Serials Librarian, I recognized an opportunity to maximize our print and journal collection. I added many public domain journals to our collection along with adding free and helpful online resources to our Library's website. MC was already transitioning away from bound print journals; they stopped binding print journals and were disposing of them instead of keeping them. Upon my arrival, there was already a plan in place to remove the bound journals that had been in the building for many years. Once those were removed, we only shelved and made accessible current journals. Library staff were able to determine that current print journals were not being used because no one requested them, and they were not leaving the Library shelves. We later decided to remove all print journals because the culture of our students had shifted to online journal use only.

I also sought to increase our student's use of interlibrary loan (ILL) during this time. I set out to have students gain easier access to both print and electronic resources. When I was hired, students could make ILL requests for books and articles through a form on the website. If they found an article in an EBSCO database that did not include the full text, they could fill out an ILL article request form on the Library website. However, students would have to go between the record and the online form. As students were researching, they would assume that they could not get the full text or they would go through the process of going to our main Library webpage and filling out a form. I wanted to ensure that our records without full text in EBSCO would include a link to an EBSCO-generated form that would send the request for full text to the MC ILL department. This form included the bibliographic information about the article. The patrons would only need to put in their contact information. This was done to give patrons easy access to request the full text within EBSCO instead of navigating back to our Library webpage. Simply putting this link in our EBSCO records dramatically increased use of the ILL service. This direct link to the form likely informed students that, when there was not a full-text article available, they could more directly request the article by filling out the form. The original ILL article request form on the Library's website was likely only known to students who had seen it demonstrated in an instruction session. We went from 90 article requests in the 2019-2020 academic year to 745 requests in the

2020-2021 academic year. This amount increased slightly in the 2021-2022 academic year to 776 requests. By changing the point of access for article requests, more students were able to access the resources that they needed.

COVID-19 did not seem to broadly impact our need to provide print resources to our students. In the 2019-2020 academic year, our students circulated 1,558 books. Although COVID-19 did impact this number, it only impacted about seven weeks of circulation due to the spring 2020 lockdown. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of check-outs increased to 2,712, and in 2021-2022 it increased to 3,747. Our overall circulation statistics have been up since before the pandemic started. Even though e-books are convenient, many students are choosing and needing the print books in our collection.

Impact of COVID-19 on Outreach

In my first year at MC, there were no events or gatherings. All sporting, Homecoming, and regular on-campus events were canceled. The institution attempted to have a campus Christmas party in December of 2020; however, that was canceled due to the number of COVID cases that were rising in the Jackson, MS area. MC also chose to not have graduation ceremonies for the fall 2020 semester because they did not want to risk mass gatherings where there could be a potential outbreak of COVID-19.

When the pandemic started, we were unable to do any Library outreach events or host events in the Library. This greatly impacted our ability to center the Library as a hub on campus and form connections with students. However, we slowly found ways to engage with the students, which eventually led the way for us to host events at the institution. My colleagues and I wanted to do something fun to engage with students during this time, and we were able to conduct limited outreach activities such as contests and small events that did not require a large gathering.

Ghosts in the Library

Our Administrative Coordinator is a talented decorator. One holiday that she gets excited about is Halloween. During the month of

October, it is not uncommon to find a witch smashed underneath a stack of books or spiderwebs in a library corner. In addition to decorating the Library, she came up with a way to engage the community.

In the fall of 2020, she stationed ghosts in the building sitting in various places. These ghosts were made from plastic skeletons and clothing. She came up with the idea of creating a contest on social media to decide what the names of the ghosts should be. One ghost was created for the students to name and another was created for the faculty and staff. Submissions were made by commenting on the picture on social media. Once all the submissions were received, Library staff voted on which ones were our favorites. The participants who submitted winning names received a gift card to campus dining. Overall, this was a well-received outreach effort. Each year, our MC community looks forward to seeing new ghosts in the building and submitting more names for this now-annual contest.

Library Madness

Since we were unable to do any on-campus events during the pandemic, I developed a remote event. I borrowed an idea that I had seen from a SpringShare SpringyCamp presentation given by librarians from the University of Dayton (Lewis and Wardell 2020). In order to engage with their students during the height of COVID, they created a March Madness-style bracket (although they did their tournament in June 2020), but, instead of basketball teams, they used books. I modified their idea for our Library and hosted this event in March 2021.

We came up with four categories: mystery, classic, fantasy/science fiction, and non-fiction. Library staff submitted nominations for favorite books from each category. Thirty-two books were selected. Once the staff went through the list of books, a March Madness-style bracket was filled out with the books to compete against each other for round one. The bracket was printed out at the desk, posted on a LibGuide, and sent out in a mass email to students, faculty, and staff. In addition to the bracket, a weekly poll was created in LibWizard. Links to the March Madness LibGuide were also posted in campus-wide emails as well as on social media. Each week, the MC community would select their favorite book and weekly polls would determine which book was most popular with MC students, faculty, and staff, all of whom could vote for their favorite. For example, during week one *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* competed against

Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief. Whichever book got the most votes for their round would go into the next week and go against another book. Our final four ended up being *Harry Potter, Mere Christianity, Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The championship was between *Harry Potter* and *Mere Christianity*, with *Harry Potter* taking the ultimate win.

We had a total of 35 faculty, students, and staff fill out brackets. In week one we had 81 votes, week two we had 34 votes, week three had 33 votes, week four had 23 votes, and, in the final week, we received 24 votes. Those who participated in either the online polls or completed the bracket were entered into a weekly drawing for campus dining. Overall, this was a very fun way to engage with our community. It allowed us to interact with our students virtually and became a fun way for us to host an event without physically gathering.

Pop-Up Popcorn Events

Under the COVID-19 restrictions, no one was able to bring or consume food in the Library. We had a popcorn maker that was regularly used before COVID-19, and, during fall 2021, we started pop-up popcorn events where we served popcorn to attendees. Our director would send an email to the campus letting them know that the pop-up popcorn event was happening. This outreach event allowed us to host a positive, in-person interaction with our patrons again.

Pop-up popcorn events in fall 2021 became the first time in nearly two years that we had an event in the Library, and everyone was excited that this event had food! They were designed as quick moments of connection that were hosted a couple of times during the semester. Over time, these events have become quite popular and have even been highlighted in campus tours. These outreach events worked because they were quick and easy to set up. In addition, they also did not require a large gathering of people; at the time, many were still hesitant to gather. Students would simply line up for a few minutes while easily maintaining social distancing.

Edible Book Festival

Since the masking and social distancing mandates had been lifted, we determined it was time to have an official, larger event in the

Library in the spring of 2022. After reflecting, we decided that it was time to bring back the Edible Book Festival (EBF).

Our EBF is based on the festivals that many libraries started doing on April 1st back in 2005. This is an event where we encourage the MC community to bring edible, book-themed dishes to the Library. These dishes are not designed to be eaten; the entries are for display only. In order to get participation from students before they get overwhelmed with school and other activities, we host this event in February. The Speed Library held this event in 2018 and 2019, and then it was suspended for two years due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although this event was not designed specifically with the pandemic in mind, it worked well to hold it during COVID-19 restrictions because it did not require a lot of people to be gathered at the same time and none of the food created for the event was consumed by attendees. The event is very passive in nature since it goes on all day, allowing people to casually walk by entries on display. There was not a particular moment when several people were gathered in one place to view the entries. We received about a dozen entries in our EBF 2022. We had entries such as models of Hobbit houses, Alice (from Wonderland) sitting next to a tree, and an icy landscape with Mr. Popper's penguins. There were even funny puns such as donut holes representing *Holes* and Dove chocolate candies in the shape of a heart to represent *Heart of Darkness*. Students voted for their favorite dishes on Instagram as well as through in-person ballots. Overall, this was a very successful event that received positive feedback from our community.

The Edible Book Festival was the first planned event that the Library hosted since 2019. Although we had the pop-up popcorn events in the fall of 2021, the previous semester, those events were more spontaneous. This was the first official event that was on the calendar and promoted on social media and in emails. It ushered in a return to the Library being seen as more than just a quiet study area. In many ways, the Edible Book Festival seemed to give us the agency over the building that had been lost to us during COVID-19. We were returning to being a community space on campus. Although the feeling on campus was still hesitant and cautious, we could feel that things were becoming normal again. Later in the semester, other departments on campus began to have events in the Library such as faculty lectures and student presentations. In the semesters that followed, more events occurred physically in the building along

with campus student groups choosing to hold their meetings in the Library.

LibWizard Tutorials

One aspect of library service that COVID-19 changed was in-person instruction classes. In times past, the MC reference librarians would invest a lot of their time in planning and creating instructional content. Typically, our reference department would conduct about 50 instruction sessions a semester and answer many reference questions. Fortunately, our Coordinator of Reference Services had already completed all instruction requests before the pandemic closed the Speed Library.

Not long before COVID, MC began subscribing to LibWizard, a platform that allows the creation of tutorials and online videos. The restrictions of COVID presented an opportunity to create online tutorials through this new tool, and our Coordinator of Reference Services began investing heavily into LibWizard. MC had created only one LibWizard tutorial before the pandemic. COVID-19 restrictions provided an opportunity to enhance this service and produce clean and efficient online tutorials. These online tutorials both informed students on how to use the Library and served as online guides acting as reference points that students could return to in order to remind themselves how to conduct research (Ben VanHorn, pers. comm., March 27, 2023).

There were no in-person instruction sessions for the fall 2020-spring 2021 academic year. Instead of classes coming to the Library or our reference librarian going out to classes, he changed his workflow to meet the needs of the school through an electronic format. LibWizard allowed us to be flexible with the format of instruction. Throughout that school year, the reference librarian created subject and class-specific tutorials. These sessions were developed for both online and typically in-person classes. Our reference librarian recorded videos that he uploaded to YouTube and embedded them into LibWizard. Students who went through these tutorials received both instruction as well as practice in finding information.

According to our reference librarian, the spring 2023 semester garnered the most excitement over online instruction since COVID-19 started. At this point, the online tutorials are serving as the preference for faculty over in-person teaching. What was once a tool of

necessity has become a preferred method for many professors. If trends in higher education continue, then there will be an increase in online education. Universities and seminaries will likely continue to see growth in remote-only student populations. For these and other reasons, online tutorials are more than just a fad for MC. They will likely be an integral part of the future of the Library.

Conclusion

COVID-19 gave Mississippi College challenges; it responded with opportunities for growth. Through the ingenuity and care of the employees at the school, MC has been successful despite new and continuing global economic hardships. Online services and resources will need to continue to expand as distance and remote education continues to grow. Even as the importance of electronic resources steadily increases, libraries will also need to ensure that their physical spaces are seen as community spaces. Libraries are inherently places of community – they are places where ideas can be shared, and they are places for people to gather.

Although the title of this chapter is inspired by the sentiment of Moses in the book of Exodus, I feel that ultimately my experience is like that of Joseph in the book of Genesis. I believe that what was meant for evil, God turned into something great. Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery and served in prison. However, God took him from these terrible circumstances to make him a prominent person in Pharaoh's court and he was used to do great things. God took me from a place that did not appreciate my work and transported me to an institution that values it. All of the skills I learned in my previous position helped me to secure the job at my current institution. Once I had been at MC for a year and a half, I was promoted to Assistant Library Director. This stands as an interesting contrast compared to my previous school where the administrators resigned from their positions shortly after they made massive layoffs. That school now has completely new leadership in all key positions and some of the librarians who were laid off have been hired back. That Seminary is a more stable and thriving environment under their new administration, which now places an emphasis on student success.

Even though much of the harsh terror from COVID-19 has passed us, it has deeply affected many throughout the world. Along with the

physical pain, it also caused deep emotional and mental scars that many people may never fully heal from. Not only did it change individual people, it also changed so many things about society. Over the course of the next several years, we will continue to see how this pandemic has affected both school and work environments. Libraries will remain important as technology continues to change and as people continue to long for community.

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Pastoral Care & Student Support

Re-Visioning Student Staff Management Through a Pastoral-Care Lens

JUDE MORRISSEY AND DEANNA K. ROBERTS

*U*ndeniably, the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the way users interact with libraries. Equally important is a reexamination of the way staff, in particular student employees, are managed in the midst of widespread trauma. Academic libraries rely heavily on student staff to manage the daily operations of the library. While libraries depend on student workers, it is important to recognize these essential members of staff as *students* before seeing them as *employees*, and to prioritize their well-being as whole persons—with obligations and concerns beyond school—rather than treating them merely according to their roles. Managers need to find a balance between the necessity to meet everyday demands and care for people holistically in order to allow for a dependable and sustained student staff.

Theological seminary studies are a different kind of academic experience—requiring students to participate in academically,

emotionally, and spiritually rigorous moments. For this reason, theological libraries occupy a special place in the academic library landscape. Users and the library staff assisting them are often faced with information-seeking behaviors and research needs that are deeply personally significant. While all management should be holistic, those managing student staff in theological libraries must take their unique positions into consideration. Ruben Arjona writes about the interconnectedness of the care of books and the care of souls, reflecting on the vocation of the librarian "as an image of pastoral care" (Arjona 2016, 744). By utilizing some of the best practices of pastoral care and by leaning into a lived pastoral theology, library staff managing and supporting student workers can create a staffing model where care for student workers' souls is positioned equally as necessary as is the care of books. Re-visioning student staff management through a pastoral care lens leads to better outcomes for students, for librarians, and for the entire academic community. In a 2012 study by Sue Shaper and David Streatfield on the role of librarians in caring for the "whole pupil" in the context of secondary education, one librarian stated:

> …we're not just librarians—but teachers, social workers, security guards, life coaches, a friendly smile, a strict word, and enthuser of reading, a leader of good practice, a constant reminder to remember the basics and so much more, and often on our own. (67)

Each of these roles exist in the environment of a theological library. Added to these is the role of pastoral care provider, a distinctly different role than pastor and entirely different than psychologist. Librarians and staff in theological libraries often occupy a middle ground—an in-between space requiring knowledge of basic best practices of providing pastoral care. Pulling from research in various fields of study—educational psychology, nursing, pastoral care and counseling, and practical theology—we bring forward a new student employee management model.

Many of the concepts related to our student-centered model of student employee management comes from our direct experience. Having first completed seminary and then pursuing a library science degree, Deanna came into student worker management with a desire to support students in a holistic way after having had the experience of working in a theological library context as a student worker at two different seminaries. The age-old joke in theological studies is that

you come to seminary to have your entire worldview challenged, to crumble and fall apart into rubble, and then rebuild yourself anew. This type of spiritually demanding work is unique to the seminary experience and requires student employee managers at seminary libraries to be ever mindful of this reality by creating a safe space and solid ground upon which their student workers may land.

Jude, by contrast, earned her Master's in Library and Information Science degree first and is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree after several years of staff management. She recognized the pragmatic difficulties student staff wrestle with such as scheduling shifts around classes, trying to arrange shift changes for sports commitments or other required events on short notice, and making time to finish assignments without neglecting their job duties. She also noticed the emotionally draining effect these difficulties have when stacked on top of the stresses of educational requirements and maintaining family relationships. For many, challenges to beliefs and questions of vocation exponentially compounded their distress at a time when they already felt distant from the people who previously supported them. As she worked to make library employment practically easier, she also started to consider how best to meet the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of student staff that so frequently impact their work. Jude needed to add more education and experience in pastoral care to her focus on "student staff as students first."

Defining Influential Frameworks

What is Pastoral Care?

While there is no standard definition of pastoral care, it is important to acknowledge that one's personal theology impacts the way pastoral care is practiced. Philip Helsel (2019) describes three main goals of pastoral care from a Christian perspective: first, to make sure that people's stories are heard and listened to (and that God has been with them in these stories); second, to change the systems of a society so that more people can fully participate in decisions that matter to them; and third, for the minister to experience God's faithfulness (xv). Coming from the Reformed Protestant tradition of the Presbyterian Church (USA), walking alongside others in this faith

journey is a central part of theological practice. It is common to hear Presbyterians referring to God walking with us. For example, the Eucharist (or communion) is an outward display of the inward reality that God is here, in and amongst us, always. Taken quite literally, librarians at seminaries or theological schools are the stewards of the workings of the Spirit throughout time and place. As Paul Schrodt writes, "Alongside the classroom is the library, a parallel educational arena" (Schrodt 1996, 138). The library is a focal point in the education and training of students for various types of ministries. Education is about empowering people to act and think independently. Part of this education for student workers is their part-time employment while in school.

While it is necessary to acknowledge that not all theological library employees are part of the Reformed Protestant traditions, hold a personal faith, or fall within Christian religious traditions, these goals can be used as a starting framework for defining how pastoral care applies to managing student workers. At the heart of pastoral care practice is *koinonia*, commonly translated into English as "communion," "community," or "fellowship." One of the most important parts of creating a workspace grounded in trust is to listen well and listen often. This practice can take shape in multiple ways: consistent individual check-ins with student workers, robust training procedures, clear processing guides to ensure staff members are prepared for success on the job, and fostering connections between teammates so that they have a community of peers to walk alongside. The basic premises are to show up, continue to show up, and build and maintain your community.

It is a tangible reality that every person alive carries a degree of COVID-19 trauma from the collective experiences of the past four years. There is evidence to support a growing student mental health crisis that can already be felt by, and in, those working in academia. Campus libraries need to be mindful of not only caring for the books and resources within the library but, arguably, it is more important to care for souls and the human resources that allow the library to operate efficiently. Writing in their study about the COVID-19 pandemic, disability, and compassion, Anne Parfitt, Stuart Read, and Tanvir Bush conclude that "the compassion generated in focus groups was remarkable in that it was unusual and out of step with our day-to-day experiences of higher education" (Parfitt, Read, and Bush 2021, 186). It is an unfortunate reality that the experience of higher education can often be one where individuals feel like academic minds and

nothing more; this applies to faculty, staff, and students alike. In the wake of a global health crisis in which every person has experienced some form of trauma, it is more important than ever to hold people in the fullness of their humanity. Building a sense of authentic community in and between student staff workers and their supervisors is an important first step in utilizing a pastoral care approach.

Whole Person Care as Student-Centered Staff Management

In a survey done by Sue Shaper and David Streatfield on the experience of school librarians in the UK, without asking questions related to pastoral care, many of the respondents replied with answers that point to four key components that impact their work. The areas highlighted were as follows:

- General support and positive relationships with pupils—"being there"
- Creating and maintaining the right environment—safe, welcoming, peaceful, accessible, and different from the classroom
- Contributing to social inclusion, self-esteem, and appropriate behavior
- Providing emotional support through professional engagement with individuals in a variety of ways—from encouraging reading and helping with schoolwork to fostering cultural engagement and bibliotherapy. (Shaper and Streatfield 2012, 67-68)

These same principles can be applied to managing student workers in a higher education environment. Be present with your student workers, and implement proactive and preventative pastoral care instead of being reactionary in the moment. From the disciplines of sports management and sports team chaplaincy, we can adopt a coaching leadership style of management. Coaching leadership focuses on the "being" of leadership and leading by opening the heart (Howard 2020, 41). This type of leadership focuses on building strong relationships and addressing the unique needs of each individual person on the team. No two members of your student staff team are the same and because of this, they each require a specialized management style. By employing the skills outlined in a coaching management style of leadership, you can build strong foundational relationships

with each of your student workers that will allow them to feel heard, seen, and supported in the entirety of their being.

Approaching student staff management by considering each one individually as a whole person rather than focusing solely on their role as a student worker is vital for supporting them as a library employee. Moreover, working from a student-centered framework can provide other opportunities to support student staff members' educational growth that is simultaneously beneficial to the library. Speaking individually with student staff about their academic interests might lead to displays curated by student workers, showcasing not only the student's topic of choice but library materials on the specific subject, as well as giving the student staff member the opportunity to practice researching and organizing a small collection. Showing display curators how to create signage for the digital monitor and producing a bibliography of library resources, including digital or special collections items, can broaden the experience in ways students might find beneficial for class projects or in their future careers, too. Student staff may also find and express an interest in librarianship, and projects that introduce them to other areas of library work can be fruitful for both the student and the library. Moving beyond the immediate needs of the library and incorporating the academic lives of student staff not only benefits the student staff member, but can be extremely advantageous for the library and the community.

We believe student staff should be viewed primarily as students. Having a student-centered management framework means prioritizing certain aspects of student staff management, including shaping library duties as educational opportunities relevant to their future careers, fitting training around class considerations, and finding ways to allow student staff to reschedule shifts with little advance notice as their academic or personal needs demand time away from work.

Student-Centered Pastoral Care in Practice

Student workers are essential to the day-to-day operations within academic libraries. They are an integral part of the staff and occupy a unique space as both employee and student. Part of supporting student workers is ensuring that there is a robust and well-thought-out

training program to introduce them to their role in the library. It is unfair to expect student workers to do their jobs well if they are not prepared for success.

Deanna's Institutional Context and Implementation

From September 2017 through November 2021, I worked as the Circulation and Reserves Assistant at Burke Library, one of 20 libraries within the Columbia University Library system. While working alongside student staff, and having had the experience of being amongst the student worker team at Burke, it became clear that student staff would benefit from a more focused management model. Even though there was a training program at Burke prior to my beginning this position, there was also an excellent opportunity to improve the process of onboarding the student employees. When I started my position at Burke, student staff would only get training during their first shift, being dropped into a new environment with no contextual knowledge. Having been through this minimal training myself and overwhelmed by it, I wanted to make sure the student staff I was responsible for managing felt more prepared for their first actual shift at the Circulation Desk. With only six full-time staff at Burke Library, we relied heavily upon the team of 15-20 student workers to assist in day-to-day operations.

When I arrived at Sage Library at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in November 2021 and took over the management of student workers, it became clear to me that training for student employees was virtually non-existent. Because of this, I decided to re-configure the training model I had used at Burke Library and apply it within this new context. At the best of times, Sage Library employs three full-time staff and has a student worker team of eight to ten students, so the need for student staff to help run the library was exceptionally great. During my year at Sage, it was not uncommon for the library to be open with only one full-time staff member and one student worker on site.

In order to ensure that student workers would enter into their roles with more confidence, knowing that they could ask questions and get the necessary support from me, I implemented a version of the training program which I had previously created and utilized with Burke Library's Public Services Librarian, Caro Bratnober. This new training model included one paid 90-minute one-on-one meeting and

a paid 90-minute group "re-orientation" training with fellow team-mates. During the one-on-one training, new hires received a tour of the Library, an introduction to the physical space they would occupy, a brief training on the computer systems they would use regularly, and brief introductions to the most essential functions of the job. The group training sessions included dinner, a fun quiz game about policies and procedures within the Library, practical hands-on training with Library of Congress (and Union/Pettee) classification call numbers, a group discussion talking through possible patron interaction scenarios at the Circulation Desk and how best to handle them, with time at the end to provide feedback for how the re-orientation session went. In addition to this, new student workers were encouraged to spend time during their first actual shift reviewing the Circulation Manual and were expected to continue working on computer-based call number practice quizzes until they were achieving 100% scores consistently.

These training sessions set expectations for the student workers to be respectful of themselves and their teammates by communicating proactively, asking questions if they were unsure of a procedure or policy to avoid giving out misinformation, and setting the foundation of trust to be able to come to me if life started to get heavy. In addition to these one-off training sessions, I also made it a practice every week to individually check in with each student employee to ask how things were going, both at work and in life. Writing about student library employee training, staff from University of California, Berkeley Library explain that their "training also explicitly reinforced the value of the student employees' contributions to the mission of the library" (Quigley et al., 2021, 195). One should not assume that student staff know how essential they are, so making it known is important. My best practice is to continuously express gratitude to student workers by letting them know that I could not do my work effectively, or well, without their support and that library services would fail without the dedicated efforts of student workers. In my current context at Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, one of six libraries in the Emory University system, I manage a small team of two to three student workers who assist in processing book donations made to the library. At Pitts there are over 15 full-time staff, and the work of book donations processing is not front-facing, yet staff doing this day-to-day work are seminary students and their successful training and ongoing management applies equally.

Jude's Institutional Context and Implementation

In January of 2020, I began working at Yale Divinity Library, located in New Haven, CT. Yale Divinity Library is a unique unit of Yale University Library, located inside the Yale Divinity School building. The school comprises Yale Divinity School, Andover Newton Seminary, and Berkeley Divinity School, all on one campus, the Quad. We have eleven library staff members – six full-time librarians, three full-time paraprofessional staff, and two part-time paraprofessional staff. We also tend to have between 20 and 25 student staff, most of whom are under my direct supervision. Student staff are primarily responsible for shelving books; scanning materials for course reserves, interlibrary loan, and patron requests; and attending the circulation desk to assist patrons with checking items in or out, as well as answering directional questions.

I came in with a student-centered framework for student staff management that I developed at my previous institution, then known as Milligan College. Now called Milligan University, it is a Christian liberal arts school in Johnson City, TN. At Milligan Libraries, we had a smaller library staff but roughly the same number of student staff members, most of whom were under my direct supervision.

Part of my approach to student staff management was the creation and implementation of a "course" inside the school's learning management system (LMS), Canvas, that provided a central, online location for student staff training, scheduling, and communication. Training was asynchronous, allowing for student staff to learn at their own pace and go back to refresh their knowledge in particularly tricky processes or infrequently invoked policies. Using quizzes, I could also track how well the students understood the material. I would then address specific needs one-on-one as I spoke with them regularly or revise the material when quiz results showed a need to better explain a subject or describe a process. The LMS also provided student staff with the ability to sign up for shifts that fit their personal schedules and communicate directly with the whole group to find shift coverage should they need to miss a shift. Despite reliance on the LMS course to provide basic training and group communication, I recognized the need for in-person, one-on-one training to reinforce areas where student staff needed more direct guidance, which was frequently different for each individual. Regularly occurring conversations with student staff during their scheduled shifts

served as check-ins to make sure everyone was working to the best of their ability to support the Library without interfering with their academic needs.

I had intended to recreate the student staff training "course" at Yale Divinity Library. While a student-centered framework for student staff management was useful under normal circumstances, it was severely insufficient to meet the moment when, two and a half months after I arrived at Yale Divinity Library, COVID-19 upset everything in March of 2020, followed quickly by pandemic-related social upheaval, eruptions of racial injustice, natural catastrophes related to climate change, warfare and civil unrest, and more. Before I could create more than a general plan for revamping student staff training, management, and support at Yale Divinity Library, students were sent home and told to remain there until further notice. Their most immediate needs shifted from academic resources for class assignments to help navigating clinical pastoral education requirements during a global health crisis and information about financial assistance for housing costs. I used the still-in-development LMS course to create an online community hub for my scattered student staff, setting up discussion boards for asking for advice or venting frustrations about the sudden shift to online learning, providing links to school information updates and support services, and listing numbers for emergency services, including mental health crisis lines. I gave out my home phone number, too, and student staff members who called to ask about timesheets or virtual private network access usually ended up starting long conversations about vexations, anxieties, losses, and other outpourings related to pandemic life. Feeling the need for further training, I did some research and discovered the Mental Health First Aid Certification, which I not only earned myself but encouraged both student and regular staff members to pursue as a personal and professional growth opportunity.

When students returned to campus, I began looking for and disseminating ways to support students' needs to reconnect with faith communities in a still socially distanced environment. Students were also looking for new practices to help them pray and worship when they could not gather together regularly or were struggling to find the same depth of meaning in old rituals in the midst of crisis. I made and distributed prayer beads and rosaries, provided a tabletop labyrinth, and set out other prayer aids and stress-relief activities. While remaining conscious of the problems of vocational awe, i.e., the conception that libraries are sacred and of librarianship as a

holy calling and therefore beyond critique, and mission creep – the expansion of duties with no recognition, training, or support (Ettarh 2018) – that plague librarianship, I recognized the unique position academic librarians at theological institutions hold. We can look for ways our libraries can and should provide some aspects of pastoral care to students who may feel disconnected from their faith communities. Most will be far from home, and those pursuing ordination will be in the midst of significant relationship changes with their faith communities and leaders. Libraries are often seen as safe spaces and librarians are viewed as caring, knowledgeable individuals – we are in a good position to act as trustworthy people to turn to in times of personal crisis.

I began reconsidering my student-centered approach to student staff management. Information about pre-pandemic mental health crisis realities and the predicted long-term results of recent widespread traumatic events led me to recognize the need to use pastoral care as a framework for management. I began reconstructing an approach to leading student staff that still sees each as individuals and whole people including the unique emotional, mental, and spiritual strains they face as students in a theological institution. Their classwork frequently challenges their core beliefs and puts them under immense pressure even as it strives to help them grow into spiritual and academic leaders. I needed to adopt an approach to student staff management with a trauma-informed pastoral care framework. Every student working in the Library for the foreseeable future will come with a history of trauma; how and to what degree each has been impacted by their trauma will differ, and student staff managers must be prepared to address their individual needs in order to create a harmonious and productive work community.

Evolving into Trauma-Informed Pastoral Care as a Management Lens

The truth is, a student-centered pastoral care framework is simply not complete without taking into account the trauma that most, if not all, of our student staff bring with them or pick up while they are under our supervision. Management that considers the student as a whole person and incorporates pastoral care for their well-being

naturally leads to the inclusion of trauma-informed care practices, creating a new theoretical framework the authors have been intentionally exploring: trauma-informed pastoral care as a lens for student staff management.

Student staff experience the same challenges as their full-time colleagues: increased demands at work, expanded duties, fewer colleagues due to retirements and retention issues, and more responsibilities in their personal lives outside of work. It is no longer helpful to assume that undergraduate and graduate students only have their academics to worry about. Many students are working one or more part-time jobs, caring for aging or disabled family members, or assisting in caring for younger family members, all while progressing through their scholastic programs. As Hailley Fargo states, "It is not enough to simply train students on policies and procedures" (2018). Student staff need to feel supported as whole people. While it is important to make sure that library services continue, and users get the support they need, student workers also need to be given flexibility, grace, and understanding. In practice, this looks like:

- Holding student workers to the expectation that they should be at work when scheduled, while also allowing them to seek coverage when needed and to take time away from work if necessary
- Full-time professional staff participating in library projects assigned to student workers
- Allowing student workers to take ownership over the duties they are assigned, and supervisors finding the intersection of the student workers' passion and skills and the needs of the library
- Managers modifying their management style for each individual student staff member
- Having easy-to-follow and frequently updated processing guides for each task assigned to the work
- Supervisors taking time from their days to get to know student workers on an individual level
- Building community between the student workers so that a network of support is created

Intentionally incorporating Helsel's goals of pastoral care provides a strong foundation for framing student staff management. Building a culture of trust where student staff feel comfortable sharing their

stories and where they feel heard is important. Reviewing and revising management practices and policies to make room for student staff to participate in decision-making over their own work whenever possible matters, too. Student staff managers must also be aware of where, when, and how their work aligns with their personal beliefs, striving to shape student staff management around purpose and meaning rather than trying to shore up productivity with tips and tricks from the most recent management bestseller. There is a qualitative difference between giving gifts of gratitude to graduating student staff and giving gifts of gratitude to graduates with whom the manager has developed a caring relationship. The first is a good management practice; the second is a reminder of *koinonia*, the community or fellowship intentionally constructed and to which student staff members belong and from which they are launching into the next phase of their lives. Community is most easily built with student workers when the relationship is founded on mutual respect, transparent communication, and kindness.

Student staff managers must also be aware that events of the past few years have left no one untouched by trauma. Rev. Dr. Karen McClintock describes "the most trauma-inducing years of our adult lives" (McClintock 2022, 1) as:

> … years that include millions of worldwide deaths and lockdowns due to the pandemic; job losses; food insecurity and houselessness on massive scales; exposed racial injustices; political and social unrest. Catastrophic wildfires are consuming farms, homes, and wildernesses; ice storms, tornadoes, and hurricanes are becoming more destructive, and more frequent (1).

These events have left their mark on those who have lived through them, including every student staff member who will work in an academic library for the next decade and more. They will all wrestle with "lingering traumatic shadows" (McClintock 2022, 1-2).

Trauma has two main components: 1) disruptive, painful experiences that challenge one's core beliefs, relationships, and faith; and 2) the internal bodily response to these experiences (McClintock 2022, 2). Originating as an external experience to which one responds internally, trauma can transform into an internal experience to which one responds externally (McClintock 2022, 2). When a person who has experienced trauma is put in a situation that is similar to the original traumatic event, they may act in response to that original

event in a manner that seems inappropriate or disproportionate to the current situation, experiencing retraumatization (McClintock 2022, 8). Like pastors, librarians are not infrequently "first responders when it comes to mental and spiritual health...[who are in a position of] coming alongside people during highly stressful times" (McClintock 2022, 14), including those experiencing re-traumatization. This is especially true when the librarian in question is managing student staff members with a history of trauma who are under the intense strain inherent to higher education. Developing a work community as *koinonia* by using a pastoral care framework positions the student staff manager in the best way to help traumatized staff members avoid re-traumatization and flourish as students, as staff – holistically.

The student staff manager needs to understand what trauma-informed pastoral care entails in order to build management practices and policies on a framework which meet the needs of their particular library and its work community. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) lists four key assumptions of a trauma-informed approach:

> A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands the potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively **resist re-traumatization**. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2014, 9)

To these, McClintock adds a fifth assumption of trauma-informed pastoral care: reconnecting traumatized people with those who love them, with communities that care for them, and with their faith (McClintock 2022, 22).

We would add yet another assumption specifically for student staff managers: reflecting on particular circumstances in the library workplace. Managers are fundamental builders of the work environment their staff inhabit; academic librarians are acknowledged experts in curating, organizing, and disseminating information. Academic librarians who are student staff managers are therefore in the unique position of being able to create a safe, supportive work community where traumatized staff members can find someone

to trust who will not only listen to their stories but will help them find connections to new communities, too. As circumstances change, and as new students take on staff positions, what is necessary for creating a good work environment will change, and managers will need to adjust policies and procedures for the team as a whole as well as determine how best to manage each staff member individually. Resource lists should be reviewed and updated regularly, too, to make sure the help being offered is still available and sufficient to meet current student staff members' needs.

SAMHSA also provides six principles on which a trauma-informed approach can be built:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2014, 11)

Student staff managers in academic libraries can use these principles as a foundation to build a meaningful trauma-informed pastoral care model in their specific contexts. For instance, it may mean cutting back on late-night shifts that are covered only by student staff when those students do not feel safe going home in the early morning hours. Practically speaking, student worker managers can employ a "your safety is our top priority" mindset when it comes to the expectations placed upon workers. At Burke Library, Caro and Deanna made discussing individual boundaries and capacity levels a central part of how to handle public service interactions at the Circulation Desk. This was done by making sure that each student worker knew:

- That they could triage matters up the chain of supervision if they had met their personal capacity for dealing with a specific patron issue
- Specific strategies for how to exit conversations with patrons who were overwhelming their time
- Clearly defined roles of what the student worker was expected to do, what their direct supervisor was responsible for, and what the other full-time staff members would be able to assist with

- Where the important list of contacts was for emergency services, security, and who the current resident assistants and peer chaplains were and in what circumstances to utilize those support systems

Creating this environment may mean discussing sensitive information with student staff when the repercussions of misconduct will affect their work environment. Unfortunately, it is not unheard of for library staff to be involved in theft, embezzlement, fraud, or other impropriety, frequently leading to a change in policy or procedure to prevent reoccurrence. Perhaps, hypothetically, a staff person is discovered accepting cash for fines and marking the patron's account forgiven, pocketing the money. A reasonable response to preventing such misbehavior in the future might be to require fines over a certain dollar amount to be paid at a central location by check or credit card. Staff members who are suddenly told they cannot accept cash and must send patrons elsewhere might face upset patrons who are not happy with the changes, increasing their stress significantly. If a policy change is made that impacts the work expectations of your student staff, make it a point of sharing with them the reasons behind the decision so that they have contextual understanding of why their work environment is changing - even if the reasons are not ones that can be made public. While privacy considerations are important, transparency is equally important and your student staff should understand confidentiality.

Many ways exist to involve your student employees in creating a work community that is beneficial to them as students and to the library. Student staff can be invited to use library space for community-hosted peer-support meetings; to work with librarians to create research guides on topics they find important; to help create workplace policies and procedures that will apply to themselves; or to curate pop-up exhibits of library materials on cultural, historical, gender, and other issues fraught with trauma. It is important to note that none of these hypothetical measures are outside the scope of the student staff manager's role, so there is no mission creep. Likewise, the transparency and inclusion of such measures is likely to reduce vocational awe, opening up room for criticism of the institution itself and finding ways to improve.

While the trauma-informed pastoral care model of employee management is new and not fully conceptualized yet, there are

several supportive actions presently available to librarians and library staff who are responsible for managing student workers:

- Re-evaluate your onboarding and training methods for student workers. Consider the training that currently exists and make decisions that will allow your student employees to begin working with more confidence. This is the foundation for all further work; make sure you are successful in accomplishing this first step.
- Seek the expertise of other staff members within your library or the school who might have relevant skills to help build a student-focused management model.
- Speak candidly with your student staff to learn how to improve the training process.
- Invite a cohort of full-time employees at your institution to commit to Mental Health First Aid certification, perhaps even incentivize participation. It is important to realize that this is an iterative process. You will need to revisit, review, and revise each step (and recertify) on a regular basis. Transparency and documentation are vital.
- Seek training in providing pastoral care. Audit a class or classes, or consult with your faith community leaders to see if training for lay pastoral care is available.
- Create a list of community resource providers for mental, emotional, spiritual, or material help that your students would find useful. Ask your student staff to recommend providers you may have missed. Post the list where students can find it without drawing attention to themselves.
- Let your student staff members know directly that you are there to listen should they need you.

Conclusion

While librarians are not mental health providers or spiritual directors and should not take the place of such practitioners, librarians who manage student staff are situated in a relationship position to provide a particular type of care to a group that, even under ideal circumstances, is likely to need support during a stressful and liminal

time of their lives. The pandemic, along with other concomitant and co-occurring traumatic events, was not the best of times, and required significant shifts in how student staff were managed in academic libraries. While it is not usually necessary to continue policies and procedures adopted to address emergency situations, many of the measures taken to manage student staff in a holistic framework should continue to be maintained for two key reasons: first, the expectation going forward for the next several years is that our student staff members will have histories of trauma; second, a holistic framework is one that supports student staff in what has always been a stressful time of their lives.

Adopting this framework requires much from the student staff manager. Constructing an environment where students feel supported as whole people and trust you to care for them, even under the most trying circumstances, while simultaneously working for the best interests of the library can be difficult, and maintaining a good balance takes effort. Serious reflection on personal beliefs and how those play out in the work community environment can be emotionally and spiritually taxing, especially if one's own beliefs do not align with the library's parent institution. At the same time, the work community environment should be inclusive of student staff members who will each carry unique, individual sets of beliefs. Among other considerations, it takes acceptance and cooperation from library administration and others managing student staff in the library. Creating space for openness and sharing must never become pressure to share when one is not comfortable doing so, and privacy must be respected. Moreover, training in Mental Health First Aid is imperative as a first step in learning to address the needs of traumatized students, especially in cases when re-traumatization might cause a mental health crisis. Certification is an iterative process, requiring recertification on a regular basis. Learning how to provide pastoral care is also vital for those who have not already acquired this skill. Finding time and resources for training may be difficult, especially at libraries that are already working with tight budgets and staff shortages. In addition, while using a trauma-informed pastoral care framework creates a supportive student staff management approach, it does not solve fundamental structural problems that frequently lead to trauma. Care should be taken to root out institutional classism, racism, sexism, ableism, and other harmful and intersecting systemic injustices embedded in our libraries.

Despite the difficulties, the effort is worthwhile for the results that can be achieved. By adopting a pastoral care framework, student staff managers can create a culture of trust and openness, where student staff members feel safe and heard. This approach not only leads to better outcomes for student staff but also benefits the libraries they support, fostering a culture of empathy, understanding, and respect that will echo through the entire institution. Although this shift in management mindset is not a quick or easy one, it is an essential step towards creating a nurturing and resilient work community. The reward is not just a functional team, but one that thrives in mutual support and understanding, setting the stage for all members to reach their full potential.

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Understanding Students' Experience of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Small Theological Libraries

VICTORIA TSONOS AND MARTA SAMOKISHYN

*T*he COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on the world, affecting post-secondary institutions in difficult ways. Universities were forced to adapt to a variety of changes in order to adhere to public health and safety measures. Many universities closed their campuses to prevent the spread of the virus, and students returned home while faculty and staff worked remotely where possible. Universities quickly shifted to online learning, which posed a challenge for both students and faculty as they had to adapt to new ways of teaching and learning. The shift to emergency remote learning, "Zoom fatigue," isolation, and other disruptions to the educational processes were among the biggest stressors for faculty, librarians, staff, and students (Fruehwirth, Biswas, and Perreira 2021; Salim et al. 2022; Salvesen and Berg 2021; Taylor and Frechette 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also posed challenges to academic libraries; described as a "seismic shift" (Salvesen and Berg

2021), academic librarians adapted their services to support online learning. Libraries required significant adaptation and investment to ensure continued support for teaching, learning, and research (Farne et al. 2021; Intahchomphoo and Brown 2021; McLay Paterson and Eva 2022).

The pandemic has especially taken a toll on the mental health of students. Anxiety, stress, and other mental health concerns, and a sudden shift to emergency online learning, have greatly impacted students' ability to engage with their courses (American College Health Association 2020; Aristovnik et al. 2020; Fruehwirth, Biswas, and Perreira 2021). The pandemic has also caused increased stress on faculty, librarians, and staff who have reported experiencing severe burnout (Salvesen and Berg 2021; Taylor and Frechette 2022; VanLeeuwen et al. 2021).

Over 45 percent of Canadian young adults (ages 18-34) admitted that their mental health worsened during the pandemic (Statistics Canada 2022). The factors associated with the dramatic increase of mental health concerns included lockdowns, social isolation, lack of support from family and friends, financial insecurities related to the loss of income, inability to exercise, and more (Fiorillo and Gorwood 2020; Moreno et al. 2020). These findings are consistent across academic literature. A British study of 1,173 university students found that over 50 percent of the students experienced increased depression and anxiety during the pandemic (Chen and Lucock 2022). A similar study in the United States (US) found that 71.26 percent of students experienced an increase in their stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically due to stressors related to health and academic performance (Wang et al. 2020). These findings were also consistent with a study by Son Changwon and colleagues (2020), who found that students' stress and anxiety were related to health concerns, inability to concentrate, social isolation, and issues surrounding academic performance. These issues became more prominent due to the cumulative effect of COVID-19-related measures (Fiorillo and Gorwood 2020).

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting emergency online learning greatly impacted students' engagement in online classes. For example, several studies found that students' levels of motivation and engagement declined (Daniels, Goegan, and Parker 2021; Hollister et al. 2022). Specifically, emergency remote learning negatively impacted students' social interactions in the

classroom and emotional engagement (Hajedris 2021; Hollister et al. 2022).

This chapter will discuss the case study of a small theological library in Canada, specifically the lived experiences of students at Saint Paul University in Ottawa during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their perceptions of the Library during these times. The research question which motivated this study is: how did students in a small theological University experience the COVID-19 pandemic and what effects did it have on their mental health and engagement? In order to answer this question, we will first describe the context of Saint Paul University, and discuss what challenges the librarians faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, we will describe the Student Mental Health and Engagement Study we conducted to shed light on students' mental health struggles during the pandemic. We will discuss the methods and results of this study as they pertain to our research question. We will then conclude with the lessons learned from this experience and address some considerations moving forward as the students are trying to adjust to a post-pandemic world.

Library Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Saint Paul University is a small, bilingual Catholic Pontifical University situated in Ottawa, Canada. The University has an enrollment of just over 1,200 students across four faculties: Theology, Canon Law, Human Sciences, and Philosophy. As the University is bilingual, all University programs and services are offered in both English and French. The University also enrolls many international students; 15 percent of students are international, with the majority coming from French-speaking countries. The Jean-Léon Allie Library is the only library branch of the University. It currently employs three librarians, four library technicians, and four part-time or seasonal support staff. Due to its small size, the facilities available on campus, and the unique demographic makeup of students, the Library adapted slightly differently during the COVID-19 pandemic than other academic libraries. After the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organization 2020), many academic libraries were forced to close their physical buildings, limiting access to their collections and facilities. With the closure of physical library spaces, academic libraries had to quickly

shift their focus to online resources to ensure continued access to their collections and services.

The Jean-Léon Allie Library is a unique space on campus that provides technology tools, physical study spaces, research and reference support, and community activities. When the Canadian government announced public safety measures to protect the health and well-being of students and staff, the first step for Saint Paul University was to close campus and shift instruction online. This closure presented the Library with various challenges due to the students' reliance on Library spaces and its technologies. The Library contains the only computer lab on campus, and does not have laptops or other tools available for loan. With many of our students not having reliable access to these technologies or internet access from home, the Library needed to adapt while adhering to public health measures. As a result, the Library remained open during the pandemic, including the lockdowns, with many provisions. Students could come to the Library to use the internet or the computer lab, but needed to adhere to public health guidelines such as social distancing, vaccination requirements, and wearing a mask. Our librarians and library staff worked mostly from home, but each came into the Library at least one day a week on a rotating schedule to perform various tasks and ensure that students adhered to the safety policies.

Many libraries had to also adapt their services to support remote learning and research. This shift included offering online reference and research support, digitizing materials for remote access, and creating additional resources for students. With a library collection focusing heavily on Theology and Canon Law, this situation provided a unique challenge for our students and staff. While the library did offer a scan-on-demand and contactless borrow and pick-up services for many of our materials, some problems needed to be addressed. Many of our print materials were not available to purchase online, and many students in Theology and Canon Law relied heavily on these print materials for their courses. Also, according to Library policy, materials published before 1950 were unavailable to loan, so students needed to come to campus in order to physically consult these materials. Special attention needed to be given early on to take into consideration the uniqueness of our collection, as well as implementing social distancing long before other universities began to reopen their libraries. Staff navigated a significant increase in student scan requests while also adhering to copyright agreements. This surge caused an increased workload and additional stress on our staff and

our students who needed to use Library spaces and resources to continue their studies.

Libraries were impacted in terms of their ability to provide instruction and support for information literacy. Many had to shift to online instruction, which can be challenging for some students and staff. Librarians received numerous emails from students with concerns over participating and succeeding in online and hybrid courses. The Library not only provided online information literacy workshops but also increased the number and frequency of these workshops to try and reach as many students as possible throughout the first two years of the pandemic. These workshops focused on information and digital literacy to address students' needs, such as including workshops on digital collaboration tools. Unfortunately, with the shift to online courses and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the Library received an influx of requests for academic integrity workshops because of a significant increase in academic fraud cases. Professors recorded higher cases of plagiarism, such as improperly cited sources or a lack of quotation marks and citations in general. The Library has begun to examine why the number of plagiarism and academic integrity cases has continued to increase throughout the pandemic.

Over the last three years, librarians and staff have witnessed how the pandemic has affected students. Many of our students communicated that the pandemic caused a dramatic decrease in their overall well-being and a significant increase in stress and anxiety. They expressed that the shift to online learning and the disruption to academic schedules has caused elevated levels of stress and anxiety, and many struggled with the adjustment. Social distancing measures led to increased feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly for students who are away from home and their support networks. The uncertainty of the pandemic, academic pressures, and concerns about the future also increased anxiety and stress. Many universities, including our own, adapted their mental health support services to ensure that students can access the help they need.

At Saint Paul University, the Chief Librarian is also in charge of the University's Counselling Centre, where students have access to various mental health services. Due to the pandemic, the Chief Librarian modified this center by prioritizing mental health initiatives and offering online counseling and therapy services among other supports. In addition to the support that the University offers, the Library wanted to better understand the experiences of students

during the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect that mental health issues such as stress and anxiety had on engagement with their studies. We also wanted to understand how librarians can address student mental health issues and better support students through these unprecedented times.

Student Mental Health and Engagement Study

In order to respond to the challenges described above, the Library sought to investigate what COVID-related factors impacted students' mental health and how the pandemic affected their ability to study and engage with course content, paying special attention to students' perceptions of emergency online learning and of library spaces during the pandemic. We sent out a mixed-methods questionnaire to all current students; the aim of the study was to investigate how students in theological schools experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and what role theological libraries have in supporting them during these turbulent changes.

Methods

We conducted a Student Mental Health and Engagement study at Saint Paul University in the context of a larger study that aimed to address the impact of mental health and disengagement on students' attitudes and behaviors with regard to academic integrity. The study contained an 18-item mixed-methods questionnaire in both official languages of the University (English and French) and was administered online. It was based on two verified assessment measures: University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI; Maroco et al. 2016) and Attitudes Toward Plagiarism Questionnaire (Mavrinac et al. 2010). In addition, we developed a third section of the questionnaire to understand how students experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and how emergency online learning impacted their engagement and mental health. This chapter will address a section of this study related to students' lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on their mental health and engagement in their courses and overall academic career, which we have recorded through the qualitative questions of the survey (see the Appendix). The questions

related to students' experiences of the pandemic included the stressors that might have contributed to students' mental health issues (i.e. stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion), stressful events that students might have experienced (such as testing positive for COVID-19 or coming into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19), the impact of these stressors on their ability to study during the pandemic, and their University experience during the pandemic. In this chapter, we specifically focus on the qualitative responses from students about how their mental health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their studies, and what impact these issues had on their engagement.

The research study received the approval of the Research Ethics Board of Saint Paul University (REB file number 1360.28/21) on March 9, 2022, and was carried out between March 14 and April 2, 2022. The timing of this study coincided with when Canadians experienced the end of the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the gradual reopening of many businesses, including that of the University. The questionnaire provided students an opportunity to reflect on their experience during the first two years of the pandemic. We received a 10 percent response rate to the survey (n = 154), which was sent to all students in the University. The students who responded were eager to share their experiences and our survey was a channel to do so for many of them. However, it is also important to note that not all students answered every open-ended question in the questionnaire, since none of the questions were mandatory in order to complete the survey.

Students Lived Experiences During the Pandemic

Students' lived experiences recorded through the open-ended questions of the questionnaire provided insights about how students at our University have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, and what specific challenges they have faced. It was important to us to capture how students felt about the changes brought by the pandemic, specifically how it impacted their mental health and engagement in their University studies. In this section, we will discuss the results of the study, capturing students' insights and responses to the qualitative questions, and focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' mental health. Further, we will explore the pandemic's

impact on students' engagement, and later discuss students' perspectives on the role of the Library in addressing those challenges.

Impact of Mental Health Issues Related to COVID-19 Pandemic on students' Life

We asked if stress, anxiety, and/or emotional exhaustion related to COVID-19 impacted the students' ability to study. Many students reported experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety, and other mental health issues. Students also reported that high levels of stress and anxiety greatly impacted their ability to focus on their studies and their motivation to study and complete their courses. The main stressors students identified in their lives that impacted their concentration included overall stress and anxiety, fear for their own and their families' health and well-being, financial instability, and sudden changes in instruction. A small number of students mentioned health and safety measures and mandatory vaccinations as one of the main stressors that caused them stress and anxiety and affected their overall well-being. Some of the international students specifically mentioned that reading news and continuously hearing about COVID-19 was quite stressful for them. One student stated: "The overall general tensions and stress of society set a mood and sort of depressive state for everyone [which] I sensed from others and felt in myself. It was trauma for all of us and that affected the ability to concentrate and focus. My mind wandered to traumatic news and lockdowns which created an overall sense of fear while [I was] trying to read and write. Emotional heaviness affected [my] motivation as well" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

When students considered the shift to online courses, the results were mixed. Few students mentioned moving courses online as being a significant stressor in their lives but they identified Zoom and screen fatigue as factors that contributed to their difficulties concentrating. One student stated, "I experienced the extended screen time with the need to concentrate. It was exhausting" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). However, some students mentioned that the shift to online courses had a positive impact on their stress and anxiety levels, as they felt safer completing their courses at home and appreciated the flexibility of online courses, such as having synchronous and asynchronous class time and alternative methods of assessment. One student stated, "I was extremely thankful for online classes,

otherwise, I would not have been able to continue [my education]" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). Another student said: "Being able to do my school work from home took off a great amount of stress and anxiety from my life. I could do my work comfortably, most of the time at my own pace, and I was more attentive than I have ever been. I believe I participated better in some cases as well" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

While some students welcomed the flexibility of online courses, others mentioned how these courses contributed to their feelings of isolation and struggles to connect with their peers and professors. One student stated: "The online format had an isolating effect. Professors took a very long time to return emails and the lack of interaction with other students impeded my learning. No teamwork, no opportunity for growth" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). Another student confirmed similar feelings by stating that "the isolation increased my stress levels and it was difficult to concentrate, read, and write" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

Particularly, the shift to fully online courses negatively impacted international students who attended synchronous online courses, as the time zones between where they lived and where the course was taught were different. This shift caused significant stress in these students' lives, impacting their ability to focus on courses and motivation to attend synchronous lessons. Stress, anxiety, and exhaustion also impacted students' motivation, with many students expressing how they struggled with motivation to attend classes, complete assignments, and even continue their studies as a whole. For example, one student wrote, "Isolation created apathy and depression, which took a huge toll on my motivation and clarity of focus and ability to complete my schoolwork to the best of my ability" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). Yet another student stated, "It was hard to focus. I had little motivation to do anything school-related, [it] felt like a waste of time" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

An interesting discovery in the responses was that some students enjoyed online courses because they were able to find more motivation being at home and less distracted by things around them: "I thrived in the remote work/learn environment. Not having to commute or meet anyone allowed me to hold multiple part-time jobs while completing my studies with high quality and quantity. This digital/remote environment has been a blessing for me and my skillset/mindset" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). These students did not mention whether they had any family or dependents living with

them. Students who did mention having to take care of family members or children highlighted the struggles of constantly living in close proximity with others and the related distractions and impacts to their motivation.

During the first wave of the pandemic, one student contacted a librarian for help as they were struggling to complete their courses because they lived with their two other siblings all attending university at the same time and their internet was not strong enough to support them all, which caused significant connection issues. They tried to make a schedule for "internet time," where only one of them would be on the internet at a time to ensure the fastest speed possible. But that didn't always work, and it resulted in these students being unable to access online classes or use the internet for their schoolwork, which caused stress and anxiety. This example is one of many equity issues that increased stress and anxiety for students during the pandemic shift to online learning.

Within the questionnaire responses, we found that stress and anxiety due to isolation varied by person, and the impact on a student's ability to study varied depending on their experiences with online learning and their family or living situation.

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Students' Engagement

Study participants were also asked to describe their level of engagement in class during the pandemic, and if they felt their engagement had been impacted directly because of the pandemic. Once again, the results varied based on students' personal experiences and their experiences with online learning. The majority of the students stated that the overall pandemic along with subsequent sanctions, health and safety implementations, and changes to mode of instruction negatively impacted their engagement with their studies. For example, one student mentioned, "While interested in my studies and the subjects, I find it more difficult to engage and remain focused with online learning due to distraction, and disengagements" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

A few students stated that the COVID-19 pandemic improved their engagement due to the shift to online classes with more flexible class times and assignments. One student stated, "I think that the fact that I was able to attend class online positively affected my engagement and attendance ... I was also able to do virtual study groups and

in-person groups when possible" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). In general, the majority of students stated that the pandemic impact on their mental health was directly correlated to their engagement and participation in class.

A little over half of the respondents (n = 78) mentioned that they felt generally engaged in class. Among those respondents, some students stated that the main reason they were able to stay engaged in their courses during this time was because all of their courses were offered online (n = 19). They also mentioned that having a good professor who was able to adapt their course content to an online environment was a significant factor in their engagement with the course. Having interesting and meaningful online discussions with their professors and their classmates along with offering alternate assessment options generally helped students stay engaged and actively participate in these discussions.

However, a little less than half of the students (n = 54) stated that they felt it hard to engage in their courses or they stopped engaging altogether. Some mentioned distractions at home as being a factor contributing to their lack of engagement along with general stress, exhaustion, and increased levels of anxiety. One student shared, "I think I have been feeling very isolated, that it has been hard to engage. My room is the place where I do everything, and I just feel overwhelmed about that" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

The biggest factor that they identified affecting their engagement levels was their experiences in online courses. As seen above, students with higher engagement mentioned how their professors were a big contributing factor, and this was similar for students who felt low levels of engagement. Students mentioned that professors who didn't adapt well to online courses and didn't offer alternative assessment methods or alternative solutions to students who struggled to attend synchronous courses as significant contributing factors to their low levels of engagement. One student stated, "I think a lot of the professors struggled to use technology and to be engaging in that environment when it was completely new" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022).

Another factor was Zoom or screen fatigue. The majority of students mentioned how staring at their screens or being in an online class on Zoom for hours at a time gradually affected their engagement and concentration. One student mentioned that they eventually stopped attending synchronous Zoom classes and only relied on

course notes, PowerPoint slides, or any other materials available on the course management system, Brightspace.

In the fall 2020 semester, the University offered hybrid options for some courses where students could attend class either in person or virtually. A few students who completed the survey mentioned participating in these hybrid courses. Unfortunately, they did not have a positive experience and identified issues with these hybrid courses as having an impact on their engagement. All the students who mentioned participating in a hybrid course, whether they were in class or online, struggled with engaging in those courses. Specifically, they found the hybrid model to be very distracting, as professors needed to focus on two groups at once, which affected the pace of the course. Technical issues, fielding questions from both in-class and online students, and lack of cohesion between the online and in-person students were all reasons they gave for feeling less engaged in the course.

Overall, the responses gleaned from the survey suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on students' mental health and well-being, which directly impacted their ability to participate in class and actively engage in their studies. What is interesting is that even if the students identified having high levels of stress and anxiety, and had a positive experience with their professors, their engagement in their courses did not change. Professors who were engaging, those who offered different forms of assessment, and professors who were flexible with class time and discussions helped to diminish students' overall anxiety and helped them stay engaged with the course content. However, Zoom and screen fatigue and overall exhaustion still led to problems with concentration and motivation when participating in online classes. While hybrid courses can help reach the most students, they are not generally favored by our students as a preferred course model. This finding was highlighted not only in this survey but was a general comment we received informally from other students who participated in the hybrid courses. After the fall 2020 semester, the number of COVID cases increased; the campus once again closed and courses shifted back online. The campus did not officially fully reopen and bring students back to the physical classroom until the fall 2022 semester. The University currently has no plans to re-introduce hybrid courses into the curriculum University-wide, but it has kept a few online courses.

Students' Experience of the Library During COVID-19 Pandemic

The Library services and spaces underwent significant transformation during the pandemic. The Library's priority was to help address the digital divide and support students with limited access to computers and internet by remaining open throughout the pandemic. While we did not specifically ask students about their experience with the Library, some students directly referenced the Library in their responses. In general, the comments were positive, with many students mentioning the online workshops and continued access to the physical Library spaces as being helpful to them and their academic performance. For example, one student said that the negative effects of the pandemic were minimal due to most of their work being in the Library, "which was open all the time" (Study participant, Ottawa, 2022). Another student mentioned how thankful they were that the Library remained open during the pandemic while other local schools were closed, as it enabled them to finish their thesis and complete their program. Without the Library being open, that student felt they would have dropped out of the program. Another student mentioned that the Library spaces were an important resource for their studies during the pandemic and allowed them to maintain concentration and motivation, which they felt would not have been possible otherwise. While some students appreciated that the Library had been open during the lockdowns, many did not visit it (due to those same mandatory lockdowns) and they instead took advantage of its virtual services. Most students relied on the virtual reference chat, which they felt supported their online learning and helped them adapt to the virtual learning environment. Many students appreciated the online support of the librarians during these times, since even in the face of challenges related to the pandemic, librarians adapted their services to continue supporting students' academic endeavors in a variety of different ways.

Discussion and Recommendations

This study provides some important findings that illuminate students' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the results of our research have been consistent with the findings

of other studies about students' mental health (Chen and Lucock 2022; Son et al. 2020; Wang et al. 2020). At Saint Paul University, students experienced similar stressors that were identified by Son and colleagues (2020) and Wang and colleagues (2020), which included health concerns specifically about loved ones, social isolation, and difficulty concentrating during their studies. The results of this study are also consistent with the findings of Appleby and colleagues (2022), who found that the pandemic has adversely affected the plans of some students to pursue further education at a university level. It is important to highlight that even though our study was completed in 2022 and many of the studies we have examined were completed earlier, we note a consistent theme of the negative impact the pandemic had on students' mental health.

Regarding online learning, our results echoed the findings by Salim and colleagues, who stated that consistent use of "video conferencing in educational settings throughout the pandemic has drastically increased Zoom fatigue" (2022, 13). The stress from long synchronous online sessions added extra fatigue to our students. While the emergency online learning experience was challenging for students, many have also expressed strong positive attitudes toward the shift. While some studies have found little or no positive attitudes among students toward emergency online learning (Aguilera-Hermida 2020), others have confirmed our findings that students had some positive experiences related to the switch during COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Elham Hussein and colleagues (2020) found that the convenience of switching to online learning was one of the satisfaction factors, along with time-effectiveness and the feeling of safety. Our study results indicate similar findings. However, we also found that students' preference toward online learning during the pandemic was directly related to their family circumstances and living situation. This correlation indicates that students' need for a quiet space to study is an important element that can contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety when it is lacking. Library spaces also played an important role in this study, since many of the students indicated that they would not have been able to finish their degree if they did not have access to technology, internet, or spaces provided by the Library during the pandemic. The importance of access for our students mirrors the access needs expressed more broadly throughout society. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted already existing inequities, especially with access to technologies and the internet, and social inequities due to family situations and other social conditions.

The lack of technology and access to a reliable internet connection placed tremendous stress on students by hindering their ability to participate in the classroom and completing their assignments. As a result, our study demonstrated that the pandemic highlighted the need for higher education to continue to address these inequities and provide equal access to educational opportunities in order to ensure students' success in a university setting.

We found that students' engagement plays a pivotal role in student success in the university. Our study suggests that a link between mental health and student engagement exists. When students experience high-stress situations like the pandemic, their ability to engage with course materials, to feel excited about their studies, and their feeling of belonging is highly impacted. The factors that impacted students' engagement suggest that social inequalities could play a role in how students engage with course materials. However, student responses also highlight the role of instructors in supporting student engagement, illuminating the impact of those who were not properly prepared to switch to emergency online learning. This finding was consistent with those of Tharapos and colleagues (2022), who found that instructors can positively impact students' engagement and satisfaction during stressful times like the COVID-19 pandemic. This result indicates that instructors need to consider asynchronous course activities in their design of online courses. They should place more emphasis on self-directed learning as students manage the stress and disengagement associated with Zoom and screen fatigue, and their inability to focus during the extended time in online meetings. In addition, the role of instructors in supporting students during stressful times is crucial, whether by extending the deadlines for some assignments, providing additional support during office hours, or offering support and understanding during classes. These supports can help ease the impact associated with potentially stressful events and maintain students' engagement in the classroom.

While the experience of our students during these times was heightened by the uniqueness and gravity of worldwide disease, this study offers some important lessons that can be applied now that the WHO has officially declared the pandemic to be over (World Health Organization 2023):

1. **Consider the whole student.** Students' personal stressful experiences in life are important to consider when it comes to their ability to study and engage with the course material.

Providing mental health resources to support students and being open, proactive, and understanding can help students feel supported by the library, and not only appreciate the services but also look at libraries as a resource for resilience in a time of need. Librarians at the Jean-Léon Allie Library taught online credit-bearing information literacy labs during the COVID-19 pandemic and, in our personal experience, the support for students' mental health and flexibility with deadlines, especially when students struggled with other stressors, was a great catalyst for students feeling cared for and supported. In turn, students demonstrated stronger engagement with the information literacy materials.

2. **Create welcoming library spaces.** Library spaces are important for student success in the university. When these spaces are not available, students struggle with the lack of the physical areas to study, and the lack of support that usually comes with it. This lack of space and support can negatively impact their motivation and engagement in their courses. As a result, creating welcoming and open spaces for students who might be struggling due to different mental health stressors is essential to promote their sense of belonging in the university community. In addition, it is crucial to create an atmosphere that is welcoming and engaging so that students can feel comfortable developing their intellectual curiosity, interacting with their peers, and fostering a learning community.

3. **Promote a sense of belonging in both physical and virtual spaces.** Since engagement and a sense of belonging are extremely important for student success, it is essential to promote belonging by offering students the services and support that allow them to feel at home in their libraries, especially during stressful times, both in person and online. Some of the ways to foster this sense of belonging include taking proactive measures on the part of the library. Active outreach strategies are important to offer supportive learning environments that facilitate student learning, foster engagement, and support students' mental health. While our library implemented more activities related to mental health and overall well-being, such as refreshments during exam times, pet therapy in the library, a "color out your stress" coloring wall, and exams survival guides, all of these measures focused on in-person activities and were not available to students online during

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the pandemic. Some of the supportive proactive measures available in virtual environments could include a personal librarian program (specifically with an opportunity to provide mental health resources for students), online programming at the library, and video tutorials. It is important to create outreach channels for students via the student union, in-classroom visits, outreach to faculty members, and being present where students are. In addition, adopting a university-wide approach to supporting students' mental health and well-being that includes the library as a partner is crucial. Such a comprehensive approach would foster proactive measures to cultivate students' sense of belonging across the university and play a pivotal role in establishing a supportive virtual and in-person atmosphere. Active outreach strategies are essential to providing students with the necessary mental health support that can support their engagement and a sense of belonging. These strategies can benefit student success by improving learning outcomes; consequently, they also benefit the larger academic community as a whole.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic taught librarians about not only students' information needs but also their mental health needs. Our study has shown that even during times of high stress and poor mental health, instructors and librarians play a significant role in student engagement. When instructors are active, open, prepared, and engaging, students are able to actively participate in class. By embracing technology and utilizing online platforms, instructors can create interactive and immersive learning environments that cater to different learning styles and preferences. When students actively participate and connect with the content, their overall learning experience is greatly enhanced. However, it is important to acknowledge that fostering engagement requires a shared responsibility between instructors and students. Instructors need to design and deliver courses that are engaging, relevant, and meaningful, employing various pedagogical strategies and instructional techniques. On the other hand, students must be proactive and self-motivated, take advantage of the opportunities provided to them, and actively participate in the learning

process. This shared engagement was difficult for both instructors and students to achieve during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially given the associated stress and anxiety.

While many universities offer mental health services to their students, stress and anxiety still impact students' ability to concentrate on their studies and their research. Research suggests that a "whole university approach" is needed to adequately address students' mental health and well-being, which includes the library (Brewster and Cox 2023). However, it is still unclear how academic and theological libraries can actively contribute in a "whole university approach" to directly address mental health and transition from having a more supportive role to a more active role in mental health services (Brewster and Cox 2023). The Jean-Léon Allie Library implemented several techniques to help foster a sense of well-being and promote positive strategies and activities to improve mental health, but studies suggest that students might require long-term support as the future effects of the pandemic are hard to envision (Chen and Lucock 2022). Academic libraries will need to implement more creative ideas and strategies to help address students' mental health needs and ensure student success, retention, and an overall positive university experience. If instructors and librarians can prioritize and nurture engagement while also addressing mental health challenges, they can help create an environment that promotes academic achievement and personal growth, preparing students for success in their future endeavors.

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Appendix: Partial Questionnaire

(Questions focused on COVID-19, mental health, and engagement)

How did stress, anxiety, and/or emotional exhaustion about COVID-19-related health issues impact your ability to study?

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Please describe your level of engagement in class during this time (interest in the subject matter, attention to course material, professor's ability to hold your attention, etc.), especially during the COVID-19-related changes to your course(s).

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In your opinion, has COVID-19 impacted your engagement? Please explain how:

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Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a student during the last two years?

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Special Collections & Archives

The Changing Realities of Special Collections and Archives

Facing the Future with Confidence

BRIAN SHETLER

*T*his chapter focuses on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work of special collections and archives. My story and experiences are not universal or representative of all special collections and archives. It is based mostly on my own experiences and perspectives while working at two different institutions: Drew University and Princeton Theological Seminary during 2020 and 2021. Each one of us experienced the pandemic in our own unique way. Large institutions handled things differently from small ones. Geographic and financial influences changed how institutions responded to the pandemic. There is no universal lived experience of this time. My hope is that my own personal experiences and the lessons I learned along the way can provide insights and recommendations for my fellow practitioners in libraries and archives. Throughout this chapter, I highlight some core lessons learned; some of them may be obvious or elementary, but they are things that were

constant and noteworthy during the pandemic and that I might not have otherwise learned.

In many ways, this entire book serves as a post-mortem for the way that we handled the pandemic as a profession. Our responses to the pandemic were made under high-pressure and stressful circumstances. I think we, collectively, did the very best we could with such uncertainty and unsettledness. Through this chapter, I explore the successes and failures of my own work in the field.[1] My criticisms and my commendations are laid out with significant 20/20 hindsight. We are more than three years removed from the start of the pandemic and it is easier now to see where we went wrong and what we did right in response to this global catastrophe. Only by looking backwards can we more properly assess what we did as professionals and how we might change things if we had the chance, or, unfortunately, how we can better prepare for another similar pandemic or emergency in the future.

A Time of Transition

In the years leading up to the pandemic, special collections and archives professionals made great strides towards increased access to materials, reduction of gatekeeping practices, and a significantly increased presence online and in the realm of social media. Even with these considerable shifts to make materials as widely accessible as possible, we were not prepared for what the pandemic wrought. In particular, we were not prepared to be away from our materials. The job of rare book librarians, archivists, curators, conservators, and others in the special collections field is so tied to physical items and our proximity to those items that it was beyond jarring to find ourselves forcibly removed from them.

The pandemic laid bare one key fact about work in special collections and archives: we have a codependent relationship with the materials with which we work. We cannot properly do our jobs without the items in our collection and the items are worthless without us there to serve as their intermediary. Immediately after my institution, Drew University, closed its campus in March 2020 and told everyone to work from home, I was at a loss. I felt as useless as the rare books and archival material that sat in the quiet dark in a locked and silent building. Like those objects, I felt static, helpless, and

completely inaccessible. Just about the only thing I could do was send the same email over and over again to faculty, students, researchers, and others interested in visiting the archives. It was always some variation of the following:

> Dear [Name],
> Thank you for contacting the Special Collections & University Archives department. Due to the global pandemic, the University has closed our campus and moved all staff to remote work for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, this means that all access to our physical collections and researcher access to the Reading Room is restricted at this time. We are hoping that this closure will be relatively short and are looking to early April as a possible return to campus. I will keep you posted about any changes to in-person access and will let you know as soon as new appointments can be booked for visiting the archives. In the meantime, if you have any additional questions, please let me know. We appreciate your flexibility and understanding during this difficult and tumultuous time.

As is usual for research institutions, we had several visitors planned many months in advance for both long-term research projects and short visits. I reached out to everyone who was planning on visiting between March 2020 and the end of April 2020. By that point, I naively believed, things would be back to "normal" again and we would be in the office and fully operational. Clearly that was a miscalculation, one that most of my fellow librarians, archivists, and curators made. We had no idea of the true impact of this global pandemic.

We did what we could to answer questions from our homes, to meet remotely with colleagues, faculty, and students, and to determine temporary solutions. Tasks that could only be completed in the office were pushed until an unknown future date. Like many other professions, those of us who worked in libraries and archives were a bit at a loss for how to proceed. The most significant question I received from people I supervised in the Special Collections and University Archives department was, "What, exactly, are we supposed to be doing?"

Our colleagues in the main Library, while certainly dealing with their own work-from-home challenges, had access to material and resources from their home offices. They could update existing online research guides, such as LibGuides, or create new ones, highlight and share online databases, and provide virtual instruction based on

online access points that students and faculty could use while they, too, were stuck at home or in the residence halls. This is not to say that the transition for our fellow librarians was any easier than our own, just that they already had resources and materials available in a remote format that more readily helped them adapt to a virtual environment. It seemed evident—very quickly—that the Special Collections and University Archives department was not so equipped and prepared.

A Whole Lot of Holes

Like many special collections departments at smaller, liberal arts institutions, the one at Drew University was run by a small staff of professionals and a great group of student workers. Drew University, located in Madison, NJ, was established as a Methodist Seminary in 1867, adding undergraduate programs in the 1930s. It has three schools–undergraduate, graduate, and theological–with distinctive student populations that all interact with the Special Collections Department in different ways. I began working in Drew's Special Collections as a Student Assistant in 2013 when I joined the school's History & Culture PhD program. During the next seven years, the Department became more proactive and focused on outreach and increased interactions with our faculty and students. In the five years that preceded the pandemic, we saw an incredible increase in the number of visitors to the Archives, particularly in terms of special events, tours, and class visits. This increase was most noticeable in interactions with faculty members who brought their classes into the archives for hands-on sessions with our materials. During the 2015-2016 academic year, we hosted 20 classes in the Archives. When I became Head of Special Collections & University Archives and Methodist Librarian in 2017, I pushed for even more class interactions. This focused effort resulted in an increase to 70 class visits during the 2018-2019 academic year. When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, we were on pace for 100 class visits for the 2019-2020 year, with 60 in the fall semester alone!

This five-year period was marked by a concerted effort by all staff to increase our presence on campus, engage more directly with students and faculty through hands-on instruction, and encourage participation in department-led events. Our aim was to become an

active and actively sought-after resource on campus, one that went beyond "the building where they have old stuff." These efforts paid off significantly; beyond increased class visits, we hosted events such as ghost stories on Halloween and a performance from a local drag queen to help kick off our fashion history exhibition. These events brought hundreds of people into the building, many of whom had never visited before.

With a staff of only four full-time professionals, these efforts meant that other aspects of our work were less of a focus for our team. As Head of the Department, I made the choice to focus our work on outreach and in-person activities at the expense of things like digitization and the development of online resources. My predecessors in the position had done a great job of establishing a more active archives space, and I did not want to lose that energetic push towards increased activity. It was a path to success for our staff, one that cemented the Department as an essential part of the larger pedagogical mission of the University.

The downside of this approach was that some work was deprioritized, including our work in the digital realm. Prior to the pandemic, we focused more on physical exhibits than digital ones, hands-on instruction rather than online lectures, in-person events and tours instead of behind-the-scenes videos and tutorials. The plan was to embrace the face-to-face contact points first and then follow up with digital platform delivery and an increased online presence. Our plans were well underway, reaping benefits for the whole campus community, as well as our department.

While this increased focus on in-person engagement was happening, the digital realm was not left entirely ignored. We had a small group of student workers who assisted in the digitization of rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and artifacts. This effort included a priority list of dozens of rare and unique items that were otherwise not available in any digital format. We supported these efforts while still focusing on outreach and growth, though they were smaller projects compared to our large-scale program of hands-on interactions. The idea was simple: we would slowly chip away at the digitization backlog in the short term, with the aim of making it a more major focus in the future when we had more time and energy to devote to large-scale digitization projects.

A Necessary Pivot

With the onset of the pandemic, our focus on in-person interactions needed to adjust. Like most institutions, we first had the naïve expectation that the pandemic interruption would last a few weeks or a month at the longest. The directive from University administration was that we would be working remotely for three to four weeks and then return to regular operations. As time progressed, the uncertainty and confusion of March turned into the new reality of April: this was not a short-term problem. Fairly soon after the initial shutdown, the University extended the remote environment from mid-April until at least the end of June 2020.

Once this new timeline was apparent, the first priority was to work with visiting researchers to cancel or indefinitely postpone their visits to the Archives. For most researchers, this interruption in their work was not unexpected. The whole world was in shutdown and quarantine mode, so it did not come as a surprise that our institution was also closed. For some, however, the interruption was both jarring and significantly impactful. These reactions were especially true among those working on dissertations and theses. By remaining closed, we were preventing those researchers from continuing and completing their necessary research. While we certainly sympathized with these patrons, we were at the mercy of administrative decisions based on the global health crisis. There were, however, a few things we could do to help these researchers. In order to help, we needed to be more accommodating and flexible than ever before. Our researchers may not have had the flexibility to adjust to the pandemic, so we needed to change our ways of working to best support their work.

Core Lesson: Flexibility in the face of adversity and the unknown is essential; without it, there is no chance of success

One of the best, and most forward-thinking, decisions that the University administration made early in the pandemic was to allow a select few people on campus for specific on-site work. This decision greatly impacted the work of the main Library and the Archives, by allowing a few of us to have access to materials within our collections. For the Archives, the selected people were myself, representing Drew's Special Collections, and Mark Shenise, representing the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. With Mark having access

to Methodist archival materials and myself having access to Drew's rare book and archival collections, we were able to access material for urgent and time-sensitive requests. High in priority among these requests was the digitization of select material for use by outside researchers, including those working on theses and dissertations. In the main Library, another member of the Special Collections & University Archives department, Conservator Masato Okinaka, was one of the people tasked with providing scans from the circulating collection.

Beginning the third week of March, those of us who were designated as "Modified Virtual" staff began to return to campus. Transitioning back to campus necessitated some significant restrictions. These restrictions included limiting staff access to certain buildings only on certain days. By alternating days, we prevented overlap of people in a building at the same time, reducing the chances of person-to-person interaction and therefore virus transmission. This approach was made very clear in official communications from the campus and Library administration:

> All classes will be delivered remotely, with additional university services and business operations supported remotely to the extent possible. Employees have been assigned to one of the following categories for this period
>
> - Virtual: all work can be conducted remotely
> - Modified Virtual: *some* work may require occasional onsite presence
> - Onsite: all work required onsite presence.
>
> To minimize potential exposure to the coronavirus, as many individuals as possible are assigned to the All-Virtual category, with Modified Virtual and Onsite kept to the ***absolute minimum***. All building access will be logged on a registry to allow follow-up in the event someone is exposed. (University Librarian Andrew Bonamici, email correspondence to library staff, March 15, 2020)

This staffing model resulted in Mark and me each visiting the archives building two days per week for short periods of on-campus work, allowing the building to be accessed a total of four days each week.

Working from home was somewhat strange and required making some adjustments, but working in an entirely empty building on an empty campus was a different kind of surreal. Previously, our

work required a lot of personal interaction with both materials and people, especially as we increased in-person activities over the past few years. Working in a quiet, empty building was nowhere near the norm. It took some adjustment on my part to learn how to work in such an environment and to make the most out of my limited time on campus.

The focus was on essential work that could only be done on-site. This work included answering reference questions related to our rare book and archival collections, ensuring the physical safety and security of these materials, and creating digital surrogates of select materials. The first of these tasks, reference queries, was essentially the same as pre-pandemic times. The department regularly received queries from internal and external patrons who needed information about a particular item or collection. Being on-site a few days a week to answer these questions was extremely helpful. I collected reference queries from other members of the Department and the Library staff at large and worked on those while in the building. Though response times were longer than usual, we were still able to answer patrons relatively quickly. Supporting internal constituents was the highest priority. With all the changes that accompanied remote learning, coupled with limited access to campus resources, we prioritized our own students and faculty over those outside the institution.

Initially, the safety and security of our material was an important part of my on-campus working days. First and foremost was basic reshelving of materials. The pandemic closure came so quickly that we did not have a chance to shelve everything in their permanent locations. While all items were locked up in our vaults and closed stacks, not everything was where it was supposed to go. Numerous carts of material that were being worked on by both staff and visiting researchers needed to be unloaded and properly shelved. Class materials that had been pulled for visits a few days before and after the closure were in limbo in the closed stacks and decisions needed to be made about what to do with the material. Do we keep these items set aside in the hope that we might be able to return to teaching in-person classes soon? Or do we shelve everything, assuming the classes would not be coming? These materials were the last to be reshelved when I went into the office in the hopes that we might be back on campus before too long. In the end, not shelving some of these carts proved very useful for virtual instruction that was held later in the semester.

The third priority for my limited time on campus, one that directly supported virtual learning, was scanning and digitizing. Digitization soon became the highest priority task that I completed during my campus visits. As it became clear that this closure was not a short-term solution, the number of requests for scanned material increased significantly. These requests came not only from outside researchers, who we expected to ask for digitization, but also from our on-campus patrons.

It became evident across campus that University staff needed to change the way we worked to accommodate the new remote learning environment in which we found ourselves. Our campus technology team quickly increased access to online learning tools and meeting platforms such as Zoom. They also expanded a program for loaning laptop computers and webcams to faculty, staff, and students who did not have access to that equipment in their homes. The Library also pivoted fully towards supporting remote learning by expanding services that could be done virtually.

This approach extended to the Special Collections & University Archives Department. Working together with colleagues in the main Library, the Department staff developed a group of digitized resources that faculty and students could use for class projects and research. Unlike our initial outreach to patrons, which suggested that the pandemic interruption would only last a few weeks, this new approach was steeped in the reality of our circumstances. In our revised communications with patrons, we no longer qualified the closure of the Archives building or suggested when it might reopen. Rather, we embraced the new landscape of virtual services and set up a variety of avenues for faculty and students to access digital resources. Our Library website provided a platform to share messages with faculty and students about our new services:

> **Remote Services from Special Collections & University Archives**
> During Drew's move to virtual business operations, the Methodist Archives building and Wilson Reading Room will be closed to the public. Remote services are available to faculty, students, and researchers during this time. This includes scanning of items from Special Collections, University Archives, and the Methodist Library as well as research assistance via email. You can also set up a virtual consultation to integrate archival and primary source content into remote courses, schedule an instruction session for your remote class, and plan assignments or research projects for remote learners. Drew

also has a number of online primary source databases that are available to all students and faculty; download a list of these sources here [link to list of resources]. If you have any queries, questions, or needs please email the Special Collections Department at *speccol@drew.edu* or University Archives at *archives@drew.edu*. (Remote services website text for Special Collections & University Archives, March 16, 2020.)

The resources referenced in the above announcement included both digitized material from our own collections as well as access to primary source materials from other institutions. The latter included digitized books through HathiTrust, primary source databases from Adam-Matthew Digital and Routledge Historical Resources, and digitized archival materials through Atla's digital resources library and the Digital Public Library of America. Some of these resources were added specifically to the Library holdings because of the pandemic and the move to virtual learning, but we were surprised by how many resources already existed in the virtual environment. It became clear that we had been under-utilizing existing digital resources prior to the pandemic.

It is easy to overlook or forget the many resources we acquired as an institution. Working closely with the main Library staff afforded not only the opportunity to suggest new databases and online resources to trial or acquire, but it also prompted me to learn just how many existing resources were already available that could support remote archival research. This discovery was an important lesson to learn early in the pandemic, as it enabled our Department to better take advantage of the resources at our disposal. It also helped us avoid duplicating work that was already done by other institutions and organizations.

Core Lesson: Do a better job of understanding the resources that are at our disposal; there is more available than you realize.

Why re-scan something that is available on HathiTrust? Why not point people to Atla's expansive digital resources rather than trying to cobble together something less robust on our own?

Through a combination of digital platforms and online resources, we were able to share a wide selection of digitized items with our students and faculty that supported the work and research they needed to complete remotely. In addition to curating this list of online resources, we needed to pivot our personal interactions with students and faculty from in-person to online. That change took creative

thinking and some trial-and-error that resulted in entirely new ways of working with our materials and patrons.

A New Way of Working

The Virtual Classroom

As we developed the lists of online resources and increased access to digital platforms and archival databases, most of the Library and Archives staff were working entirely remotely. Everyone became familiar with the world of Zoom meetings, virtual workspaces, and distance-learning support. Students and faculty moved to fully remote classes on Zoom and within our online learning platform, Moodle. Class visits that had been scheduled for the second half of spring 2020 either needed to be canceled or an alternate method of delivery devised.

The Special Collections and University Archives Department met via Zoom to discuss how to approach class interactions in a virtual environment. Our usual method of teaching with rare books and archival materials was not possible. We could not curate the normal showcase of materials and have students interact with items in a hands-on manner. Our Archives classroom was no longer the place for these interactions, so we had to determine how to replicate these visits in the virtual realm.

The first idea we thought of was digitizing classroom materials. We started by looking at our current scanning equipment to see what options we had:

- ScanPro 3000 Digital Microfilm Reader
- ScanSnap SV600 Overhead Scanner
- Photography Studio with Canon EOS Rebel T5 Camera
- Epson Expression 12000XL Flatbed Scanner
- Atiz Bookdrive Mark 2 Book Scanner

The equipment on hand in March 2020 was relatively minimal, but did provide us with a variety of formats and functions. It was all relatively new, having been purchased over the previous 3-5 years. We had been using this equipment with increased regularity as the number of scan requests we received increased each year. While we

did not push for major digitization projects (as discussed above) we digitized a steady flow of material for a variety of purposes during the previous few years. It was a good starting point for virtual class visits.

We had four classes scheduled in the two weeks immediately after the campus shutdown in March 2020. Two were art history classes, one was a class on the history of advertising, and the third was a digital sociology class. All four lent themselves nicely to a virtual format. With only a little bit of preparation (and scanning) time, we were able to gather enough resources to share with the students.

Admittedly, these first virtual presentations were not as dynamic or exciting as a hands-on lesson in the Archives. With a quick turnaround time, we were basically reduced to creating simple PowerPoint presentations for a lecture-style delivery. But with only a few days preparation time, it was a successful venture. The digital sociology class, in particular, proved very successful. Connecting the class visit with their lesson on memes, the students used scanned images from a variety of special collections material to create their own memes about the pandemic. It was both an interactive way for students to remotely use archival materials and a creative outlet for students to share their concerns, frustrations, and fears. The resulting work was highlighted by Drew's Communications Office as an example of a success in the new virtual learning environment.[2]

Not all courses had such creative projects, but we did aim to make the virtual class visits as interesting and interactive as possible. For the art history classes, this strategy meant using our digitization equipment to our advantage by scanning material at very high resolution so students could see details and pigmentations on early printed books, manuscripts, and artifacts that they would not be able to see as easily with the naked eye if they were in the Archives classroom (see Figures 1 & 2). We could not fully replicate the hands-on, in-person experience, but we could present to students as close to that experience as possible. This approach, developed with Special Collection's resident Art Historian Candace Reilly (Methodist Library & Special Collections Assistant), was extremely successful and repeated in numerous art history classes during the spring 2020 semester and beyond.
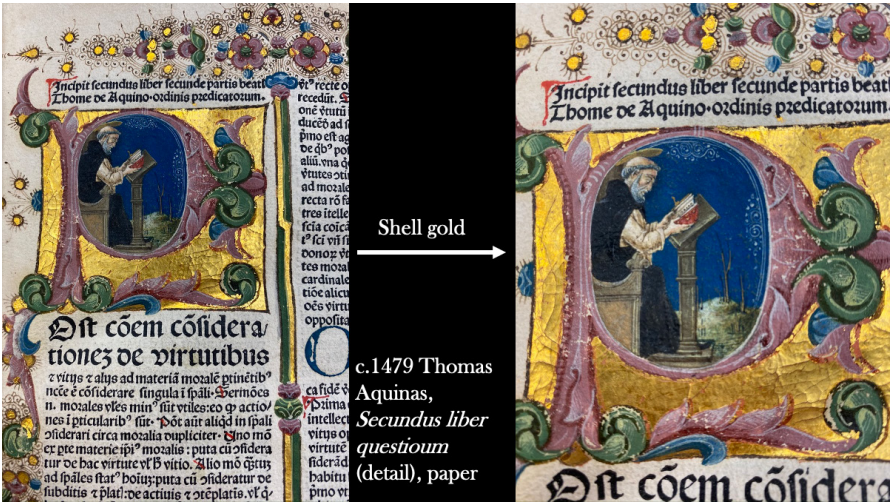
Figure 1: PowerPoint slide from art history class presentation, using high resolution scan to show students the difference between the use of shell gold and gold leaf in Drew University's incunabula collection.

Figure 2: PowerPoint slide from art history class presentation, using high resolution scan to show students the difference between the use of shell gold and gold leaf in Drew University's incunabula collection.

We were able to expand this approach even further in the Fall 2020 semester after we purchased the Elmo TT-12G Interactive Document Camera. The document camera allowed us to livestream our interactions with rare books and manuscripts. Candace and I created an interactive lab in the archives where we could show classes materials

virtually through Zoom and turn pages, zoom in on details, and point out particularities as if the class was in the room with us.

This interactive virtual class experience extended to course assignments. For the history of advertising class, for example, students were originally going to look through selections of different popular magazine and newspaper publications to select an advertisement for analysis. They would look at the ad and determine a few key aspects such as the intended audience, the style of advertisement, and how successful the advertisement was in their opinion. With a classroom filled with hundreds of issues of popular periodicals, the students would have had their choice of eras, topics, and potential audiences. Since we could not scan hundreds of individual issues of magazines and newspapers, we settled for a selection of ads from a handful of diverse publications from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Students were given a brief overview of each of the publications

Core Lesson: Teaching with rare and archival materials can be done successfully in the virtual environment.

that we scanned and were sent a link to a Google Drive folder with scanned images available for their use. We also provided information about and links to a selection of databases that included digitized periodicals such as the *New Yorker*, *Life*, and the *New York Times*. By providing digital access to these and other resources, the assignment could be completed without changing too much from the original instructions.

Having worked with four classes in quick succession so soon after the shutdown, it was evident that other class visits could be reworked or reimagined without too much difficulty. The key was to engage with faculty first to determine which approach would work best. We offered to host classes in different modes: either lecture style or with a more interactive component. We offered both live and asynchronous formats, which was important for students scattered across the country and around the world following the campus shutdown. With a variety of options available, I reached out to all faculty whose classes had been scheduled for a visit to the Archives over the last months of the semester. I was honest with the faculty about the limitations of this new virtual format but assured them that we could still provide a strong pedagogical interaction for their students that would be similar to an in-person visit.

The result of this outreach was nearly universal support from the faculty. We only had a few faculty cancel their class visits, and these canceled classes were more than made up for by faculty who

had previously not had a visit scheduled but saw how easily we could incorporate the archives into the distance learning environment. In the end, we taught more classes in the virtual space than we would have in the physical one, increasing our interaction with students by a half dozen class visits. Our Department's flexibility and inclination to try new approaches, coupled with willing and eager faculty, made the best out of a difficult situation and positioned Special Collections and University Archives to be an important part of the pedagogical support system in the virtual campus.

Remote Research Support

Faculty and students were not the only constituents for whom we needed to be flexible and find new methods of delivery. As mentioned above, in-person researchers were among the most negatively impacted by the campus closure and the limited access to materials. For students and scholars around the world, the pandemic was an interruption of research for class papers, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, book chapters, conference papers, monographs, and much more. This situation was the case for many of the researchers who were using, or planning to use, the materials in our collections. I cannot count the number of emails that started with something along the lines of "I know there is a worldwide pandemic going on, but…" The "but" was always followed by a request or plea that we were not in a position to fulfill. Whether that request was opening our doors for just one person or scanning entire archival collections, hundreds of linear feet, the requests were well beyond our remote capabilities.

The desperate need to access material was made very evident in the first month or so of the pandemic. I had researchers ask if they could come and pick up material to take home. A colleague at another institution was asked by a researcher if they could borrow archival materials and bring them to a nearby hotel to work on their research. Alumni and former faculty asked if we could mail materials to their homes. These requests were well out of the scope of normal activities and resulted from moments of panic and uncertainty on the part of the researchers. With some patience and understanding, we were able to respond to all requests with more realistic and practical solutions.

The more common requests we received were fairly simple: digitizing material for remote research. These requests were not difficult

to fulfill, but we were stymied by our limited access to the building only a few days a week. The solution to this was not to add more people to the building access (this was not allowed per University administration) but to recalibrate how quickly and efficiently we scanned materials. With any scan request from a researcher, I made sure to set low expectations for what we could provide. It was better to under-promise and over-deliver than to pretend to the researcher that things were operating as usual. We also had to adjust our criteria for scanning requests. Prior to the pandemic, we would not scan any materials beyond 75 pages. This was, we thought, a generous amount of material to make available on demand and one that we could meet through a combination of full-time staff and student workers doing the scanning. If a researcher wanted to see more than 75 pages of a particular text, we suggested a visit to the Archives in person to view the materials themselves. This solution was, of course, not an option during the pandemic, so we had to recalibrate our expectations for scanning. Requests for much longer scans were the norm and we did as best we could given the limitations of staff time and access to materials.

In order to properly set expectations and not be taken advantage of, we needed to communicate carefully with researchers. A negotiation of sorts had to take place with certain requests:

- "We cannot scan the entire four volume set of these hymns, but we can scan the title pages and/or tables of contents and you can let us know which particular hymns you would like to see."
- "This material is too delicate to scan with our current equipment, but if there is something you are looking for specifically, we can take photographs of certain pages or sections."
- "This archival collection is not digitized and cannot be scanned in its entirety, but I have attached a copy of the finding aid for your reference. If there are certain folders that fit within your research scope, we would be happy to scan those for you."

By navigating these requests on a case-by-case basis, we were almost always able to decrease the amount of material requested to a much smaller portion of the whole. In this way, we also helped the researcher to better pinpoint the subject matter or topic that they were seeking.

In many ways, we became the proxy of researchers during the pandemic. We served as their eyes looking through the rare book stacks and their hands turning the pages of documents in the archival collections. Our work became more about helping guide the researchers to the material they needed rather than just fulfilling requests. Because I had to slow everything down and dig into the requests with more detail and attention, I could better serve the needs of the researcher and give them what they needed without much fluff or fodder.

Core Lesson: Taking the time to meet with researchers helps build a better relationship and provide better and more accurate services.

Taking the time to work through requests with researchers was conducted primarily via email but also offered through more direct meetings on Zoom. These conversations enabled us to better understand and respond to the needs of patrons and to talk with them about the real aims of their research. I felt more connected with the researchers this way, the same way I felt when patrons would be sitting in the reading room and I could chat with them about their projects. An email exchange was fine and often sufficient, but to truly understand the needs of researchers during the pandemic, I found it much more useful and fulfilling to meet with them face-to-face in a virtual environment. I continued this approach after leaving Drew University at the end of 2020, taking the experiences with me to Princeton Theological Seminary where I later worked with reference library staff to meet with students and other patrons together on Zoom to answer questions and provide information for research.

Core Lesson: Use the successes of our pandemic response to help highlight the importance of traditional library and archives work.

There is a danger to this comprehensive and individualized approach, however. Evident in nearly all aspects of the library field, the pandemic changed how we do our jobs, and our patrons became comfortable and familiar working remotely with library resources, both materials and personnel. The in-person interactions with materials that were so ingrained in our patrons before the pandemic had been challenged by a huge increase in online and virtual access to materials. The result was a user base that was still very active, but not in the same way as before the pandemic. This change was evident in Special Collections and Archives as well as the main Library as we moved back toward

"normal" operations. Our patrons, whether students and faculty from our own institution or outside scholars from other organizations, were essentially trained not to need to come into the building anymore. We were so good at transitioning to an online virtual environment, patrons learned that they did not always need to use our physical resources.

In the past year, I learned to be careful in handling researchers whose expectations have shifted and see the ways of the pandemic—with the ease of virtual access—as the new normal. I still receive requests similar to those made in peak-pandemic times. By being such supportive, flexible, and successful professionals during the pandemic, in ironic contrast to the low expectations we tried to establish, we in fact set high expectations for levels of service and responsiveness. We need to create a balance between traditional services and the higher-level, on-demand service models of 2020. By pushing back slightly on patron requests, we can try to bring their interactions with our holdings closer to pre-pandemic realities. We can still successfully serve patrons without becoming their servants. Some of the ways in which we learned to interact with researchers remotely in the pandemic can help reset expectations in the current environment. A Zoom meeting or phone call can help mitigate an outlandish request to become one that is more reasonable and effective.

Processing and Cataloging on the Homefront

While we were all scrambling in reaction to an ever-changing landscape of work and life, the collections under our care were waiting patiently to be used. In a field that regularly has backlogs measured not in number of items but in number of years to process and catalog them, we expect processing to move at a relatively slow pace. It is not a surprise, therefore, that processing our collections was the first thing to be deprioritized when the pandemic hit. The human impact on campus was much more important: How is everyone doing? How will we reach our students and other patrons? How do we connect with colleagues? These questions were far more pressing than those related to our materials: When will we finish cataloging that donation? Who will work on rehousing that archival collection that arrived in liquor boxes?

Once we got into a good rhythm with working from home and supporting patrons remotely, we turned our attention to working

with materials. After shelving material that had been left out when we closed down, we began to assess where current projects stood to see if any work could be done by those working from home. Following the lead of our main Library colleagues, I put together a selection of books that I could catalog from home. This cataloging work happened in one of two ways. First, I brought books that were not rare, fragile, or of great financial value home, one box at a time. Second, for those books that should or could not be taken out of the building, I scanned title pages, copyright information, tables of contents, and other front matter to create catalog records remotely. This process enabled us to continue to add books to our catalog even as access to the building was limited.

Core Lesson: Even in the worst scenarios, good and productive work can be done. Adapting your work to new realities can result in opportunities that may not otherwise have been available.

I prioritized uncataloged materials that were both easiest to catalog and of potential value to our virtual researchers. This prioritization process created an increase in copy cataloging and selecting books that would be useful for class visits. While we did not catalog a huge quantity of our backlog, we made progress and did not let the backlog linger completely untouched for months and years.

The same approach was taken with our archival collections. While we certainly could not take archival materials home (not only due to the rarity and fragility of the items, but also due to the sheer size of some of the collections) we could work on them from a distance. Some of the projects our staff and student workers worked on remotely included:

- Editing and updating metadata for digitized photograph collections
- Reviewing existing finding aids to update and add subject headings
- Editing and updating descriptions of bound manuscripts using digitized surrogates
- Using existing inventories of archival collections to develop formal finding aids
- Researching the history of our most heavily used rare books and manuscripts (provenance, ownership marks, scarcity, etc.)
- Creating blog posts about our collection

- Updating the Library website to include more detailed descriptions of collections
- Transcribing manuscript material using digitized surrogates

These projects could all be done remotely, and almost all without the need to have any physical items from the collection on hand. In fact, many of the projects that were undertaken during the pandemic may not have been completed under normal circumstances.

The transcription project was a great example of a need meeting an opportunity. Before the pandemic most of our student workers who were interested in transcribing manuscripts were working on other projects or were focused on particular collections that did not need transcription. With the shift to fully remote work, we were able to give students an opportunity to work with materials that were otherwise not transcribed. I scanned letters, diaries, other primary documents, and sent the images as PDFs to students to transcribe. If students encountered difficult words or passages, they would note them in the transcript and I would check the original document when I next went into the Archives.

The projects we worked on during the first six months of the pandemic helped us to describe and make accessible our materials and, therefore, better serve our patrons. They also provided our students with a way to continue working and make money in a time when there was endless uncertainty about the financial impact of the pandemic. By developing a robust series of projects and aligning them with the interests and skill sets of our student workers, we were able to keep 70 percent of our student workers employed during the rest of the semester and into the summer. The result was an eager and engaged group of student workers who were given the opportunity to continue learning on the job, had a creative outlet, and felt like they had a purpose outside of schoolwork. One student noted:

> I'm incredibly fortunate in that I've been working for the Archives remotely. The transition to virtual schooling has not been an easy one, but having the luxury of consistent and reliable work has been comforting. In addition, Brian and Candace have gone out of their way to keep tabs on all of us by holding regular Zoom meetings for everybody to check in and catch up. I know I probably sound like a broken record when I say this, but I truly am so grateful to have had such a wonderful experience as a student employee. (Zoe Bowser, "Working

The Department's student workers did an incredible job of adapting to the new world of remote work, and their offsite assistance was essential as we dealt with researcher requests and the demands of our ongoing work.

The full-time staff were likewise adaptable to working remotely, even though it was quite difficult at times to figure out how to work so far away from our materials. University Archivist Matthew Beland developed a LibGuide for our digitized resources, including digital copies of the Drew *Acorn*, the long-standing student newspaper at the University. By highlighting and working with digital surrogates of our holdings, he was still able to provide access to Drew University's history.

My Special Collections colleague, Candace Reilly, and I navigated a particularly strange processing problem. On March 6, about a week before the campus shutdown, we attended the 60th Annual New York Antiquarian Book Fair. The fair was a strange affair, with people hesitant to get too close or shake hands because of the rising number of COVID-19 cases. While there, we purchased some items for Drew's collection. We took some of those items back with us, while others were due to be mailed to our offices at Drew over the coming weeks. With the closure of campus, including some of our mail services, it was unclear how and when the materials would be delivered.

This was a concern not only for us at Drew but for many other librarians, archivists, and curators around the world. What were we to do with items already ordered or being donated that were on their way? One colleague at another institution had some rare books delivered to her house since the institution's mailroom was closed. Holding onto rare materials in your own home is not ideal and leads to all sorts of questions about what happens if the items are stolen, damaged, or lost. I intercepted a few donors before they sent material and asked them to hold their donations until we returned to campus. However, the books we bought at the book fair were already on their way. The only thing we could do was wait and see. Part of my access to campus was the ability to visit the mailroom on my chosen on-campus days. I dutifully went every time I was on campus in the hopes that the material we purchased had arrived. It took many weeks of fretting and uncertainty before all the items finally made their way to campus.

The final material concern we addressed related to our physical exhibitions. About a month before the campus closure, we installed a new exhibit on the history of travel in the Archives exhibit space. There were a dozen cases of material that, as of mid-March 2020, no one would come to see. Instead of deinstalling the exhibit, I created a video tour of the exhibition that was posted on social media. Even though people could not come into the building to see the display, we could still share it with the public. After the videos were uploaded, I deinstalled the exhibit and put the material away. The videos were well-received and prompted us to use our social media platforms to post more videos, including behind-the-scenes tours of the Archives building. In this way we shared our materials with the public and highlighted parts of our collections without having to open the doors.

Administration from a Distance

Thus far I have focused mainly on the work being done, not on the people *doing* the work. The activities discussed above were completed while our staff dealt with personal difficulties, struggles, concerns, and confusion. No matter how flexible we were or how successful our efforts, we were ultimately improvising throughout, often making processes and workflows up as we went. I am extremely proud of the work the Department completed during the initial wave of the pandemic and the sustained work that we continued to produce over the months that followed.

A key part of this successful, sustained work was our internal communications during the first few weeks and months of the pandemic. We met regularly via Zoom to check in with each other on our work and home lives. These regular check-ins provided me, as a manager, with an opportunity to see how everyone was coping and provided a space and place for everyone to share concerns, vent frustrations, celebrate our successes, and plan for future projects. These meetings also allowed me to share administrative updates which I learned from my own regular meetings with other Department Heads and the University Librarian. Prior to the pandemic, these meetings were more intermittent and often felt rote. During the pandemic, I realized how important the regular check-in and touch points were for myself and everyone else in the Department. Rather than a perfunctory exchange of information, these meetings served to help lift one another up and support the work we did. In the world

of work-from-home and isolated days in an empty building, having a way to meet, share, and chat with colleagues was needed more than ever before. Our personal connections were strengthened and professional ties reinforced.

As mentioned above, we hosted similar check-ins with our student workers. Students found comfort in these meetings and used them to share frustrations as well as their personal struggles and triumphs, and to take a break from the relentless bad news of our pandemic world. For the full-time staff, the meetings were a chance to see how our students were coping and learn how the virtual learning environment was working (or not working) from the student perspective. Students from all levels worked in the Archives, from first-year undergraduates to PhD students, and everyone in between. The result was an interesting mix of lived experiences and personal reactions to the pandemic and its impact.

Core Lesson: Regular meetings and check-ins are more than just a management tool; they can seriously impact how people work with one another and on their own.

As the spring semester ended and we looked towards summer and fall, these meetings took on a slightly different tone with students expressing sadness. Some students were graduating and had missed out on the opportunity to fully experience their senior year of college. Our student workers expressed uncertainty about what would happen after the summer. For those returning to school, would they be back on campus and working in the Archives, or would we still be in this virtual environment? As May 2020 came to a close, these questions remained unanswerable.

For the staff, we worked mainly within the virtual environment throughout the summer. Restrictions eased to accommodate an increase in the number of staff who could work a modified virtual schedule and come to campus on occasion to work onsite. On certain days, I was no longer the only person in the building. Things were slowly coming back to normal, though we knew it would be a long time before we could fully return to a pre-pandemic working environment. By mid-June 2020, we began to plan for what reopening the campus might look like. With the fall 2020 semester approaching, the Library and Archives began to prepare for a return to partial in-person work. The University decided upon a hybrid semester with some classes meeting in person, some online, and some in a hybrid mode.

In August 2020, after six months of being stuck in our homes or in empty buildings on campus, we started to return to a version of our jobs which seemed more familiar. They were not exactly what we left behind in March 2020, but they were far more recognizable than what we experienced in the earliest days of the pandemic. Things did not go back to "normal" or even close to it in the fall 2020 semester, but we felt as if we were climbing out of the darkest depths of the pandemic and back into the light. We took what we had learned from the prior months and applied it to this new, hybrid environment. We met regularly and checked in with one another to make sure things were moving in the right direction, but now had an occasional opportunity to meet in person instead of exclusively on Zoom. Perhaps most satisfyingly, we had the chance to work directly and regularly with our materials again. That, more than anything, was the most healing aspect of our return to on-campus work. For each of us in the Department, being able to physically touch and work with the material regularly was a joy.

A New Job in an Uncertain Time

This chapter closes with a final transition: this time, a personal one. In December of 2020, I left Drew University for a new job. It was a difficult decision and a difficult time to leave, but the opportunity to work at Princeton Theological Seminary was one that I could not refuse. While I felt sad about leaving my colleagues, friends, and students at Drew, I knew this was a chance to grow professionally and take a step forward in my career.

Changing jobs during the pandemic was not easy. By December, I felt we were in a great rhythm at Drew. We had done extraordinary work and made incredible strides, especially considering the size of our Department and the amount of work we accomplished.[3] Leaving the place where I had worked for so long and where I exerted so much energy to lead us in the right direction, in spite of a pandemic, was difficult. Going to a new Library and leading a Department facing its own problems and in need of a new direction was even more of a challenge.[4]

When I started as the Head of Special Collections & Archives at Princeton, it was evident that this position was very different from my previous one at Drew. I was the only staff member in the Department when I was hired, the previous staff having left or

retired back in 2019. Throughout 2020, including the pandemic months, the Department was essentially shuttered and not in operation. What I walked into was a combination of stasis and a clean slate which was both scary and exciting. I had to learn an entire collection without anyone to guide me through the materials. In many ways, the pandemic helped me to acclimate to the position much more quickly and effectively than if I had joined an open and fully operational Department. From January 2021 until June 2021, about six months, I worked by myself in the Department, going into the office a few days a week and working from home the other days. During my on-site days, I took the time to explore the collection and learn its layout. I oriented myself to its organizational schema, explored its facets and foibles, and absorbed and embraced this unknown collection.

Changing jobs during the pandemic might not seem like a good decision or a low-stress situation, but in many ways it was both. I had the freedom of uninterrupted time to learn as much about the collection in six months as I could. By the time the Seminary emerged from its closed campus status, I felt like I had been there for years instead of months. I then hired a small group of student workers who helped dig through backlogs of rare books, archival collections, and artifacts, and we started to reorganize the collection, making it accessible. The Seminary reopened to the campus community in June 2021, and to the public at the end of August. With the return to in-person services, my time of appraisal and slowly learning the collection ended. In its place, however, was as close a return to pre-pandemic work as I had witnessed in nearly 18 months. Even though I was in a new job at a different institution, it started to feel like my old job again. The pandemic brought about a countless number of changes and interruptions, but there were days in the fall of 2021 that felt as if the world was mending.

Core Lesson: Take advantage of opportunities for internal assessment and reflection on the work you do. We are not often given moments to slow down and evaluate what is around us.

Conclusion

The threat from COVID-19 is not over. Even now, there are hundreds of deaths and thousands of people stricken every day around the world. We have reached a point where we have learned to live with the virus in its endemic status. As this shift occurred, thanks largely to vaccines and boosters, the world of libraries and archives has almost returned to pre-pandemic work. Some of us still work from home a few days a week, but we meet in person more often than not. Class sessions and researcher visits in the Archives at Princeton Theological Seminary happen regularly and in person. We have full access to all our materials again, without the need to scan everything on demand. While special collections and archival work is looking familiar and becoming "normal" in many ways, the legacy of the pandemic and our experiences in dealing with it remain.

Valuable and important lessons were learned from our responses to the pandemic. For rare book librarians, archivists, and other special collections professionals, much was gained from our experiences that began in March 2020. The pandemic exposed some of the most glaring weaknesses of archival and special collections work and the institutional structures (or lack thereof) that support this work. Archivists and special collections librarians were not well-prepared to quickly move into an entirely online format. Patrons and staff were too reliant on, and tied to, the physical materials that made a fast pivot to virtual work and services challenging and frustrating. Many of these problems existed prior to the pandemic, but archivists and special collections librarians did not see the problems because of the traditional approaches we embraced. These problems were quickly illuminated when the standard way we worked was threatened.

What is clear, however, is that the collective response to the pandemic showed that we can be more nimble, flexible, and adaptable than we first thought. For special collections and archives professionals, this response necessitated a clear need to move quickly, adapt as needed, and prepare for an unfamiliar future. Our institutions are notoriously slow to change; the pandemic forced us to be nimble in our response to change. In many cases, the efforts made to address pandemic-related issues proved beneficial beyond the worst parts of the crisis. From new realities of research to the development of new pedagogical tools to virtual methods of archival interaction, we created a different future for the work we do as rare book librarians,

archivists, and special collections professionals. The core lessons I highlighted throughout this chapter speak to areas of professional growth for special collections and archives departments. It is not a comprehensive list of lessons learned throughout the field, and they may seem obvious to some. For me, however, it has been helpful over the past three years to keep these lessons in mind, not only to shape the way I work and lead in the context of the pandemic, but to shape how I want to work and lead moving into the future.

Notes

1   The work I discuss in this chapter was, of course, not done by myself alone. The lessons learned and failures experienced may be mine, but the work of dealing with the pandemic was a collective effort. At Drew University I was fortunate to work with an amazing team of hard-working and dedicated professionals. Of note are the other members of the Special Collections & University Archives department: Matthew Beland (University Archivist), Masato Okinaka (Library Conservator), and Candace Reilly (Methodist Library and Special Collections Assistant). My great thanks to all of them for helping us to survive and thrive throughout the toughest parts of the pandemic.

2   For coverage of how the class used Special Collections material to create the memes, see "Drew Class Meme-ifies the Coronavirus" on Drew University's website: *https://drew.edu/ stories/2020/03/27/drew-class-meme-ifies-the-coronavirus/*

3   Our tiny, but mighty Department of four people became only three after the retirement of our Conservator in May 2020. The position was not replaced, leaving us with only three full-time staff in Special Collections & University Archives for the summer months and into the fall. This fact made my departure at the end of 2020 even more difficult—with the remaining staff members having to carry the weight of the Department on their own for months before my replacement was hired.

4   My colleagues at Princeton Theological Seminary have written an excellent chapter in this book about the ways in which they handled the pandemic and the many changes that it wrought.

COVID-19 Web Archives

Evolving Catholic and Marian Devotional Practices

KAYLA HARRIS AND STEPHANIE SHREFFLER

*T*he COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on the work of academic librarians and archivists. Stay-at-home orders meant that librarians often had to set aside in-progress tasks and identify new remote projects. For archivists who primarily work with physical items, the pandemic also meant reassessing how to provide services to patrons, steward the collections, and continue to acquire new material that falls within the collecting scope. The Archivists at the University of Dayton used some of their time at home to start web archive collections that recorded how the pandemic affected Catholic life in the United States and the world.

The University of Dayton (UD) is a mid-sized, Catholic research university located in Dayton, Ohio. Founded by members of the Society of Mary, the University upholds the values and charism of the religious order. In particular, the Marianists' devotion to Mary still resonates on campus, even as the faculty, staff, and students become more

diverse in their backgrounds and beliefs. The University Libraries is composed of the University Archives and Special Collections, Roesch Library, which is the main campus library, and the Marian Library. Founded in 1943, the Marian Library holds the world's largest collection of materials on the Virgin Mary, including rare and circulating books, archival collections, artwork, and artifacts. There are seven full-time employees in the Marian Library, four faculty and three staff. The Director oversees all operations, the Collections Librarian manages the printed material, the Visual Resources Librarian manages the art and artifacts, and the Archivist manages the archival collections. With a similar religious focus, the U.S. Catholic Special Collection (USCSC) was established in the Roesch Library to document the history and culture of Catholicism in the United States and support the Religious Studies doctoral program at the University of Dayton. The materials include books, periodicals and journals, archival collections, artifacts, and ephemera. That Library is staffed by one Collections Librarian/Archivist and is open to researchers four days a week. In addition to providing instruction, research support, and materials to the campus community and beyond, both of these collections are a visible manifestation of the University's identity.

Pandemic Archiving

Archiving contemporary events is important for documenting history for future generations though it presents its own challenges, especially in technique and scope. The COVID-19 pandemic was not the first time that archivists rushed to collect content for a rapidly evolving historical event. This process of quickly collecting materials can include gathering both physical and digital material and is referred to by various names such as "spontaneous collecting" or "emergency collecting." The Archive-It blog specifically has a section in their blog dedicated to archiving spontaneous events, including efforts to document the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the October 1, 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada, and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic.

 With support from a Lyrasis Catalyst Fund Grant, Kara McClurken from the University of Virginia (UVA) conducted a survey in 2018 about the practices that cultural heritage institutions employ for this type of rapid collecting. In the introduction of the report that followed,

she noted that the interest in conducting the survey stemmed from UVA's experience archiving content related to protests and counter-protests in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. Notably, at the time of this survey, 43 percent of survey respondents reported that their institution had been involved in an event that required rapid collecting (McClurken 2019). Prior to 2020, many institutions had their own isolated experiences with rapid collecting; however, COVID-19 was unique in the way that it affected all cultural heritage institutions to some degree. During COVID-19, some institutions developed initiatives to collect physical and digital artifacts such as photographs, personal journal entries, and more. For example, the Arizona State University School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies developed an initiative with several academic institutions called Journal of the Plague Year, to "document, curate and preserve experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the historical record, to empower diverse communities to collect, share and interpret their own stories of the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop a model for rapid-response born-digital collecting practices, theories and ethical frameworks" (n.d.).

Web archiving already faces challenges in terms of identifying appropriate scope and resources, but archiving religious content may be even more susceptible given the challenges of preserving content related to particular religious interests and specific congregations. In the summer of 2018, Boston College sponsored and hosted the conference "Envisioning the Future of Catholic Religious Archives." Bringing together archivists, historians, and leaders of religious communities, the conference was an initial step at addressing challenges faced by religious orders coming to completion. "Coming to completion" refers to the end of a religious order because of a lack of new members. Prior to completion, these orders must grapple with how to preserve and provide access to their archival legacies. After the conference a working committee issued the working paper *Preserving the Past, Building for the Future* (McCarthy et al. 2019). Representatives from many religious orders at the conference had similar challenges with an aging population and limited resources to be able to fund a professional archivist, or even to be able to properly steward the existing records of the congregation.

In December 2020, Joe Puccio, from the Library of Congress, wrote a reflective blog post detailing some archiving challenges which included developing a sustainable workflow that reflects diverse viewpoints while acknowledging that not everything *proposed* to be

archived can feasibly *be* archived (Puccio 2020). Tori Maches from University of California San Diego described similar challenges in July 2021, including "digital FOMO" (fear of missing out) when trying to determine what online content to collect (Maches 2021). She also discussed the emotional toll of this type of work during a pandemic and the importance of self-care. Even well-resourced archives with robust web archiving programs faced many challenges when collecting content relevant to their institution and the COVID-19 pandemic because of the enormous scope.

The Pandemic at the University Libraries

On March 10, 2020, UD suspended in-person classes and moved to remote learning. Shortly after, it instituted remote work for the majority of its employees, including almost all employees of the University Libraries. Library staff continued to work at home until August 2020, when most employees came back to work in the office at least one day per week. The number of days worked in-office varied from person to person, depending on their particular job duties and the needs of each department.

From March to August 2020, Library staff were asked to identify remote projects. This task presented a unique challenge for Special Collections Librarians and Archivists, as their work often centered on working directly with physical objects such as books, audiovisual materials, and artifacts. Security concerns made it impractical for Librarians and Archivists to bring these items home. Instead, their work during these months included writing metadata, creating online tutorials and research guides (such as LibGuides), performing outreach to faculty and staff, and creating new projects. One particular project of note was the creation of web archive collections that documented the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Catholic life and Marian devotion. Created by the Archivists of the Marian Library and the U.S. Catholic Special Collection, the project was not only important for capturing material that might otherwise be lost, but it also allowed other Library employees to contribute their expertise to this project remotely.

Web Archiving at the University of Dayton

In 2015, the University Libraries purchased a subscription to Archive-It, a web-based software created by the digital library Internet Archive that allows partner institutions to create curated collections of web archives. These annual subscriptions provide partners with a set amount of storage space for their collections. The Archivists of the Marian Library and the USCSC saw this subscription as an opportunity to expand beyond traditional acquisitions and collecting. One of the driving factors for the University Archives and Special Collections Archivists to acquire this software was the ability to capture institutional content available only on the internet.

Partnering institutions identify certain URLs, called seeds, that they wish to archive. Library personnel add these seeds to the Archive-It software and run crawls on the URLs to save these pages. Crawls can be saved automatically, or archivists can run test crawls that allow them to review what was picked up in the crawl. Crawls can be one-time or recurring, and partners can customize the frequency of recurring crawls. Archivists can also specify the depth that they want the crawl to go to, meaning that the software can crawl a single page, an entire site, or even the site plus the pages that are linked from the original site. Librarians and archivists at partner institutions can then add metadata to individual seeds and collections. Archive-It collections are indexed by Google, making these collections discoverable and accessible to researchers across the world.

In 2018, the Archivists and Technical Services Librarians at UD completed a project to harvest and index metadata records for the seeds into the EBSCO Discovery Service, locally branded as UDiscover. The Coordinator of Cataloging created a data dictionary that mapped Archive-It metadata fields to the metadata fields in UDiscover. UDiscover indexes the Archive-It collections every two weeks, ensuring the web archive collections remain up-to-date and accessible in the discovery layer. This indexing process was developed to provide another access point for users to find and utilize the web archive collections beyond UD's institutional page in Archive-It.

Prior to the pandemic the Marian Library and the USCSC maintained a few different types of web archive collections. For the Marian Library, two of these collections were single-seed collections of an organizational website for which the Marian Library served as a designated repository. The websites for the Mariological Society

of America and the Friends of the Creche were crawled once annually to capture any new web content as part of an agreement with these organizations to archive physical and digital material. Another collection, Mary's Gardens, was created for a one-time capture of a website transferred as part of a deed of gift before being taken offline after the creator's passing. Although the Marian Library had several collections, they were not time-consuming after the initial set-up, and they did not require a large investment of staff time to maintain these scheduled crawls.

The USCSC had only one web archive collection prior to the pandemic, but it contained numerous seeds with a more active crawl frequency schedule. The American Catholic Blogs Collection archives blogs written by American Catholics and seeks to record multiple viewpoints and perspectives on Catholicism. Though not comprehensive of every blog written by an American Catholic on the internet, the collection does require more maintenance than the Marian Library collections to ensure links remain active. It also takes more time to find websites and create the unique metadata for each seed. Archivists in both areas had ideas for other websites to begin collecting, but, tasked with managing all aspects of the archival collections, beginning new web archives was not a top priority.

Lourdes on Lockdown

In early March 2020 when the novel coronavirus had not yet been declared a pandemic, we learned about the impact of the virus through news stories around the globe. An upper-level English seminar class was visiting the Marian Library to look at some of the artifacts from the Lourdes shrine in France and discuss different approaches to healing. However, instead of focusing solely on the planned lesson, students were curious about European news and were thinking about how the virus would impact Lourdes where the act of healing is intertwined with being in community with others. Later that evening, a news article described how the shrine would close to the public for the first time in history and that the healing baths had already closed in February (Mares 2020; Catholic News Service 2020).

The homepage for the Lourdes shrine is a good example that illustrates why web archiving is so crucial. Organization websites are

intended to convey updated information to their visitors. One day, the website communicated "Lourdes is open" and, the next day, the content was updated to reflect the shrine's closure. Generally, these updates are not archived by the institution themselves, and, if a website has not been archived, it would be difficult to trace these changes. Especially during the pandemic, information changed at a rapid pace and websites were continually updated to reflect new guidelines, closures, and impacts. For future researchers to understand how the pandemic timeline evolved, archived websites, especially multiple crawls of a single site over time, can be helpful in understanding these types of changes.

A Virtual Clipping File

Prior to the pandemic, in addition to the web archive collections consisting of a single seed for designated repository agreements, the Marian Library had also started a collection of "clippings" of miscellaneous sites on the internet related to Mary. This Marian Library Web Clippings collection was inspired by a physical collection of clippings in the Marian Library referred to as the Sutton File. Mildred Sutton, a longtime volunteer for the Marian Library, clipped articles from secular and religious presses related to the Virgin Mary. She created an extensive cross-referencing system of keywords, and the clipping file expanded beyond newspapers to include other ephemera, numbering over 60,000 items. Even with Ms. Sutton's diligent work, the collection still only represents a fraction of the news stories related to the Virgin Mary. The creation of the web clipping collection was an attempt to adapt Mildred Suttons's project to the digital age.

Archiving Marian Devotion

The Marian Library Archivist began to notice many instances of Marian devotion in the news online and saw the value of archiving this content using Archive-It. At the beginning of this effort, sites were crawled as they were found or sometimes were directly sent to the Archivist from colleagues once they learned about the project.

Image 1: Homemade COVID-19 masks featuring Our Lady of Guadalupe and her immaculate heart made by Danielle Lehr. Photograph by Danielle Lehr.

Image 2: Dungaw in thwe Philippines. Photograph by Mia B. Eballo.

Similar to other pandemic archiving projects, an appeal was issued via the Marian Library blog for examples of personal stories about Marian devotion during the pandemic (Harris 2020). While the collecting of physical and digital materials from individuals was not nearly as successful as web archiving, it yielded several submissions, including photographs of handmade masks featuring Our Lady of Guadalupe (see Figure 1). Another user shared an example of Marian piety in the Philippines, photographs of the practice of "dungaw," which means "to look out" or "looking out the window" (see Figure 2). Mia B. Eballo wrote in her submission to the Marian Library,

> "Dungaw" in Filipino means "looking out the window." This practice was done not only because people cannot go out of the house to engage in religious activities but this also is an invocation of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints whose images are put near the window in a manner that they are looking out as an act of request/appeal for God to help us. (M.B. Eballo, personal communication, June 6, 2020)

This specific practice during COVID-19 was covered in the *Journal of Religion and Health*. The authors found this practice fostered hope for those who participated, helped them feel a sense of community while isolated, and even brought joy during such a difficult time (Del Castillo et al. 2021).

As the weeks progressed and everyone began to realize that the pandemic was not a short interruption to daily life, examples of Marian devotion on the internet grew in number. It became clear that a workflow was needed to keep the project manageable. The Library Archivist created a Marian Library Web Clippings Tracking spreadsheet in Google Sheets. New seeds, or URLs, were added to the spreadsheet when they were discovered or sent to the Archivist. A Google alert was also created using several search terms such as "(Virgin Mary AND COVID-19 OR coronavirus)" to find relevant stories that were delivered in a digest email daily. Then, the Archivist used the spreadsheet to add multiple URLs to Archive-It to crawl in a batch once or twice weekly. This workflow of batch crawling only once or twice weekly was especially helpful when working a split schedule. Additionally, it was easier to track when a seed was collected and described.

The Marian Library collecting scope is international, and it was interesting—professionally and personally—to see what was

published about Marian devotion within various communities. In March 2020, Pope Francis made a public address invoking the title "Mary, Health of the Sick" and asked the Virgin Mary to watch over the world during the crisis. The Italian Air Force brought a statue of Our Lady of Loreto aboard an aircraft they flew over Italy in order to bless and provide protection for the entire country (Roman 2020). Later, Chilean priests also had a statue of the Virgin Mary flown over the country in a helicopter after a laywoman witnessed the ceremony in Italy and helped organize the ritual in Chile (Gayangos 2020).

Personal stories of devotion were discovered and recorded, such as a local Ohio news story highlighting an interview with one family who clutched an icon of the Virgin Mary while discussing the impact of the pandemic. There was another story of a teenager in Wisconsin who sought to lift spirits while social distancing through her sidewalk art of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Despite capturing these stories, many instances of Marian devotion by communities and individuals were not written about on the internet and, therefore, were not captured in this project. The Archivist took solace in the effort to collect as much as possible, and that doing something was better than not collecting any of these stories.

COVID-19 and the U.S. Church

Inspired by the pandemic collection started by the Marian Library Archivist, the USCSC Collections Librarian/Archivist identified a need to archive websites that documented the effect of the pandemic on the Catholic Church in the United States. The pandemic caused major upheaval in church practices. Perhaps most significantly, Catholics had to attend virtual Mass because of church closures and social distancing rules.

The Collections Librarian/Archivist named the USCSC pandemic collection "The COVID-19 Pandemic and the U.S. Church." Her initial goal was to collect COVID-19 updates that appeared on diocesan websites. The updates gave a moment-by-moment picture of the pandemic in real time, including announcements of church closures in March 2020, followed by information about churches reopening and accompanying social distancing guidelines. These diocesan website seeds comprise the majority of this collection. The collection also archives personal reflections written by American Catholics on their blogs,

Catholic news articles on the pandemic's impact on devotional practices, and informational pieces on COVID-19 vaccines.

To find websites to archive, the Collections Librarian/Archivist employed a couple of strategies. The first strategy was locating diocesan and archdiocesan websites and news updates. This process was fairly straightforward. The Archivist visited these sites and checked to see if they had pandemic-related content. She was also familiar with Catholic blogs due to the USCSC blog collection, and could easily check those blogs and others to see if their owners had commented on the pandemic. The second strategy was to locate news coverage, although finding current news articles over the course of the pandemic presented a special challenge. Unlike the diocesan websites or blogs, which featured COVID-19 updates less frequently, the number of news articles on the pandemic grew daily. To help identify articles of interest that specifically commented on the pandemic's effects on the Church and U.S. Catholics, the Archivist used Google alerts to send results for the search string "(coronavirus OR covid-19 OR sars-cov2) AND catholic" via email daily. Results came from news sources, websites, and blogs, thus searching broadly for COVID-19-related web sources. These alerts proved highly effective at helping the Archivist continually identify new seeds to potentially add to the web archives with minimum time and effort required. After identifying seeds, the Archivist decided on the parameters of the crawls to save these sites. Although she used recurring crawls for the other USCSC web collections, the Archivist chose to use one-time crawls for the COVID-19 collection in order to reduce the amount of storage space required.

Developing Sustainable Workflows

Running a test crawl and a scheduled crawl took about 48 hours. After that period, the archived webpage could be viewed in the pandemic collection, but it lacked any metadata to make it findable and accessible. A couple of years prior to the pandemic, the Special Collections Librarians and Archivists at UD created a data dictionary for the web archives collections. They worked with a cataloging librarian and consulted the recommendations contained in "Descriptive Metadata for Web Archiving," published by the OCLC Research Library Partnership Web Archiving Metadata Working Group in 2018. They then created a schema with mandatory and optional metadata fields.

The mandatory fields were title, URL, description, subject, creator, source, language, type, date, rights, and collector. The URL field was automatically filled in by the Archive-It software, but the rest of the fields required manual input. Archive-It includes a bulk metadata editing feature, so some fields that use the same language for every seed could be filled in for many seeds at once. The bulk editing saved a great deal of time and allowed for greater focus on more unique fields, such as description and subject.

UD Archivists felt comfortable filling in most metadata fields by themselves with the guidance of their original schema created in 2018. However, they wanted to include Library of Congress subject headings for each subject field. Knowing they had less expertise with these headings, they worked with a cataloger to create the subject headings. They granted her access to the backend of the software so she could directly add subject headings to each field.

Given the increasingly large number of one-time seeds crawled in the collection, columns were added to the Marian Library Web Clippings Tracking spreadsheet for metadata and subject headings. It became too onerous to complete the metadata for each seed when it was crawled. Instead, the focus became finding and crawling the seeds before they were lost, with the idea that metadata to facilitate access could always be added later. In the Marian Library, the work of adding the basic metadata became a shared responsibility with staff and student employees who needed remote work. Already having developed the schema meant that even with multiple people working on the project, the metadata stayed relatively consistent.

As mentioned, the Special Collections Cataloger had direct access to Archive-It and could add the subject headings. Marian Library staff experimented with the best use of time. Sometimes the Cataloger would add the subject headings to the tracking spreadsheet first for multiple seeds and add them into Archive-It later. The Cataloger explained that this process helped them see similarities across different sites when selecting subject headings. The Archive-It metadata interface does have a quirk where once a term is entered, it cannot be edited, but must be deleted and replaced. In order for the subject headings to match the subject headings in the discovery layer, spaces and dashes had to be the same. For example, the heading "COVID-19 Pandemic 2020 -- Religious aspects" had to be manually entered exactly and if the spaces were removed from the dashes, it would not be seen as the same subject heading in the discovery layer.

Impact of the Web Archive Collections

Creating the pandemic web archive collections was a significant project for many reasons. The project could be worked on remotely and it proved easy to manage in small amounts of time. Both Archivists had to split their days between work and caring for their small children, and so they faced frequent interruptions. This project featured several small discrete steps that could be worked on individually or all at once, depending on the time available: identifying seeds, running a test crawl, examining the test crawl's results, running a final crawl, and writing and proofreading metadata. Additionally, none of these steps required the type of deep thought necessary for other work such as writing or creating course content. The project was a good fit for those times when various stresses of the pandemic meant the Archivists had reduced concentration and focus.

This project also afforded an opportunity for the Special Collections units to work more closely with the Special Collections Cataloger. Her deep knowledge of cataloging standards made the metadata stronger and made the collections more discoverable by researchers. She shared how much she enjoyed cataloging a different type of content.

Although many archivists created pandemic web archives, the Marian Library and USCSC collections were unique in that they explored the pandemic through the lens of Catholic practices and devotion. Much of the focus of COVID-19 web archiving projects examined public health issues, but religion is often a source of comfort and hope for those who believe in a higher power. Catholicism especially is very community-focused, and social distancing regulations and access to rituals had a lasting impact on U.S. Catholics. Since the Archivists are Catholic, the project felt very personal as they were struggling with their own emotions and personal lives while trying to complete the daunting task of archiving the pandemic impacts on their own religious tradition. Archiving these web pages gave the Archivists a sense of purpose. They could see directly how their work would help preserve records of the pandemic for use by researchers, both in the present and in the future.

At the beginning of this project, it was not clear when the pandemic would officially end, especially as the virus itself and its impacts will be around for a long time to come. Yet, the Archivists chose to end their active pandemic collecting efforts with their

return to in-person work and regular duties at UD in July 2021. In August 2021, UD resumed regular in-person classes. The Archivists use the pandemic web archives in instruction for undergraduate students as examples of modern archival practices. Students often think that archives only collect papers and manuscripts that are decades or hundreds of years old. Having lived through the pandemic themselves, many students over the next several years may feel a particular interest in the contents of this collection. The collection can help them understand the importance of continuing to preserve modern history. The web archive collections were used in the exhibit text for *Rituals of Healing: Body, Mind, Spirit*, which ran from February 8 to April 20, 2023. It explored "the beliefs and practices surrounding religion, medicine, and healing of the body, mind and spirit" (Schweickart 2023). Specifically, visitors to the exhibit saw how the title "Mary, Health of the Sick," has been used for centuries and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the emotional toll of trying to document and preserve as much information on the impact of the pandemic on U.S. Catholics as possible, the authors felt that anything saved is better than nothing. While archivists around the world saved snapshots of the impact of COVID-19, UD Archivists feel that it is inspiring to be one small piece of such an enormous effort.

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Technology
in Transition

Equipping Myself

From the Old Normal to the "New Normal"

HANNIE RILEY

*I*n 2020, without warning, COVID-19 made us stand still within a lockdown. Until that point, I thought global disasters happened only in movies. Having been born and raised in a relatively peaceful country, South Korea, I never thought I would witness a complete lockdown due to a disastrous pandemic, not only in the city where I live, but throughout the world. During the first lockdown, I could not count how many times I said to myself, "this isn't real," and questioned, "is this a dream?" or "am I on a film set?" I found it extremely difficult to accept that the pandemic was happening in real life, and that people I knew were seriously ill or dying. Fresh fruit, sanitizers, and toilet paper rolls were rationed. We were at war but with something we could not tangibly see and touch. I felt as if everything was out of control. It was a bleak period for me personally.

At work, as a lone, part-time librarian working in a small theological college of about 200 people in Oxford, England, my time had

always been stretched. I was continuously pressing on so as not to lose momentum. However, with the advent of the pandemic and the complete lockdown, suddenly everything had to stop. We were given an order to "stay at home" by the UK government on March 23, 2020 (Institute for Government 2022) and suddenly I had to rush to pack my belongings to carry them home. There was a limit on how many books I could transport to my home. I brought my laptop and a few folders. Unlike some professionals such as receptionists, shopkeepers, and cooks, I was lucky enough to carry on working remotely. However, as the Library was physically closed and there was no way to access the print collections by me or our users, I felt helpless.

At first, regardless of how I felt, I was extremely busy dealing with many panicked emails from library users who were confused due to this sudden disruption. Everything was a mess for staff and patrons with the sudden closure of the physical library. Despite the chaos, I had to quickly find ways to provide library service and support users in navigating a quickly changing digital landscape. I urgently bought a large amount of e-books for the Library. I rapidly realigned book collections, services, provisions, and operations to work better online.

Despite many librarians around me being furloughed and most libraries closing for months, numerous publishers and resource providers responded to a collective call by professional organizations such as the Research Library UK (RLUK), Association of Colleges, The British Library, and Jisc, as well as procurement bodies including Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium, Society of College, National and University Libraries, Universities UK, and UK's Copyright Negotiating and Advisory Committee (RLUK 2020, "RLUK and Partners"). More and more free e-resources were made available temporarily to cope with the pandemic. These materials and special offers were greatly welcomed by academics, researchers, librarians, and students.

After the first lockdown, unlike most staff at my institution, I was allowed in the Library as I was the only one who worked in the building and easily maintained social distancing mandates. This arrangement enabled me to offer a "click and collect" service, where residential students who still lived in the College at that period could request books. Requested library books were left outside of the Library door for students to pick up. However, I was still isolated and mostly worked online. The College was closed for another year or so,

only offering e-teaching as many staff and students were bound to their homes.

During this isolated period as a sole librarian, I reached out to other librarians like me in my network. The Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries (ABTAPL) acted as my lifesaver. ABTAPL is "an organisation formed to help those working in libraries containing theological, philosophical and related materials by sharing information and experience" (ABTAPL, n.d.). It has over 80 institutional members and 30 individual members (Riley 2021). Under the leadership of chairperson Sally Gibbs, ABTAPL recognized that its members were under great pressure facing unexpected challenges and risks in many ways. To support its members, ABTAPL quickly adapted its practice and continuously provided services. As its members were often isolated and remote in their small theological seminaries, they focused on sharing resources and information across the membership. For example, they started monthly Zoom meetings where librarians could share experiences and information to help cope with the difficult times. To fulfill the demand of members' training needs to learn how to adjust to a new working pattern, two emergency online sessions were delivered. Also, ABTAPL invested in an e-book library to enhance members' development in their roles, and 37 titles related to librarianship and management were made available to members beginning in September 2020 (Gibbs and Riley 2021). ABTAPL was not the only association responding to their members' needs.

According to *RLUK's Responses to the Covid-19 Crisis*, published by RLUK in 2020, many libraries experienced something similar:

> The last three months have seen the onset and spread of Covid-19, which has caused major disruption to all institutions, including RLUK member libraries. March 2020 saw the physical closure of all of RLUK's 37 member libraries and the movement of their operations online. RLUK also readjusted its operations and moved quickly to support members navigate a fast-changing landscape. (n.p.)

When things were more settled, and after I went through a long list of not-so-urgent administrative work, my solitude offered me time to pause and to think. The unexpected and unimaginable pandemic shifted my perspective of life and shook my core. Although I adapted quickly and effectively to the unprecedented circumstances by making Library content available electronically, identifying accessible

e-resources for research, uploading digitized materials for reading lists, providing online chat services, and rolling out new applications and systems for remote operations and communications, this rapid realignment highlighted many challenges and difficulties.

I started to re-examine the role of the Library and how it was perceived within its parent institution as this COVID period highlighted the importance of making the Library's voice heard. This thought process eventually made me come to a realization that I had spent far too much attention on readers, services, the operation, and provision of the Library with a particular emphasis. I had forgotten about myself. Instead of looking outward to learn what the readers' needs were, what their research behavior looked like, what their information literacy competency was, and what new trends were pending in the information and library sector, I started to look inward, focusing on myself and examining who I was as a librarian, the library services I provided, the way I reached out to users, and the future of my career. I objectively assessed what I was capable of in order to succeed in performing what I was called to do in this new digital era.

Challenges

After the huge adjustment to digital library provision, I realized that the biggest challenge was to change my mindset. My attitude toward digital skills was rather passive and patchy. Of course, even before the pandemic, I knew digital technology and development had been moving at a substantial pace, bringing about changes in the world of life and work. I was preaching digital literacy to library users, but I confess that I only acquired enough digital skills to get by in my day-to-day job. I did not fully embrace them to rise above the status quo. I blamed my age and complained of time constraints which limited my investment and effort in learning. However, COVID turned my thoughts upside down. Initially I persevered, thinking this time would be short and temporary but a slow recovery from COVID dictated my next steps. Providing an online service was not merely an extra add-on to my job; it became the only provision of library operations. The shift towards using more technology was drastically accelerated in the transition to remote working in the "new normal." I could not sit back and embrace technology only as required anymore; taking time for leisurely implementation was gone. Hesitantly,

I had to face the reality that I had been sitting in my comfort zone, and I needed an objective tool to assess my technological ability.

Digital Capability

Jisc is a not-for-profit UK digital, data, and technology agency focused on tertiary education, research, and innovation by providing hardware, software, and networking solutions (Jisc, n.d., "About"). They devised a discovery tool "to support individuals and managers in a range of roles by helping them to identify and reflect on their current digital capability and make plans to improve their capability through a set of recommended actions and resources" (Jisc 2017). Digital capability is a term used by Jisc to describe "the skills and attitudes that individuals and organisations need if they are to thrive in today's world" (Jisc n.d., "Digital"). Six elements are defined in building digital capabilities:

> ICT proficiency (functional skills): information, data and media literacies (critical use); digital creation (creative production); digital communication, collaboration and participation (participation); digital learning and development (development); digital identity and wellbeing (self-actualising). (Jisc 2017, 1-3)

This framework considered all the elements of digital ability comprehensively even including digital identity and well-being. Jisc has updated these elements since 2022, and they created role profiles. One of these roles was devised to address the capabilities of library and information staff working in higher and further education (Jisc 2017).

The Jisc digital capability discovery tool was an excellent toolkit to help me analyze my digital skills. This self-assessment tool consisted of creative reflection questions which were designed to help users reflect on their digital capabilities and identify current strengths and areas for development. The framework and toolkit gave me objective insight into my digital capabilities and helped me to identify gaps. It gave me motivation and helped me set goals to develop my skills. By knowing my weaknesses and strengths, I started to read more about related topics. Thankfully there were numerous reports and papers coming out during that period to support librarians and the higher

education community. One of the most influential documents was *A Manifesto for the Digital Shift in Research Libraries* by RLUK (Research Libraries UK). In May 2020, RLUK held a webinar to officially launch this manifesto (Greenhall 2020).

The Digital Shift

A Manifesto for the Digital Shift in Research Libraries, published just before the onset of the COVID pandemic, was timely. A dedicated working group of colleagues representing RLUK's member networks created this manifesto to provide a ten-year vision for the digital shift already occurring in research libraries in line with radical technology development and innovation. They recognized that the digital shift in this era is not a simple transition from analog to digital; it is more holistic than that. They defined digital shift as "an umbrella term for the analogue-digital transition of many library services, operations, collections, and audience interactions" (RLUK n.d.). This ongoing transformation of the digital shift is discussed in multidimensions to enable the library and information specialists to be aware of what is on the way and for them to prepare to adapt with "a mindset of digital curiosity and experimentation" (RLUK 2020, "A Manifesto").

In this document RLUK illustrated library roles in the coming future where digital technologies profoundly affect our society, higher education, and the workplace:

> In 2023, UK research libraries will be an integral part of the local and global knowledge environment. We will offer environmentally sustainable, inclusive services that enable a diverse set of users to identify and use trusted knowledge resources from all over the world. Our open research and digital scholarship services will enable seamless and persistent sharing and reuse of research outputs. Library staff will be increasingly recognised experts in (digital) research methods and valued partners in the research process, even leading in some fields. Print collections will be as easy to discover as our digital ones, and we will provide digital and physical spaces that meet researchers' needs. Libraries will have mastered the use of artificial intelligence technologies, integrated into technology platforms that are open and

transparent, built on sustainable and ethical principles. (RLUK 2020, "A Manifesto")

To achieve the digital shift, four themes were underpinned: skills and leadership, spaces, stakeholders and advocacy, and scholarship and collections (RLUK 2020, "A Manifesto"). According to RLUK, to be recognized as an expert and partner in digital research and its methodologies, it is critical for library and information specialists to obtain digital skills and be equipped with these skill sets. With this newly acquired ability, they can play an important role in leading some research projects in areas like data science, artificial intelligence, and textual analysis with new software and applications.

The manifesto also acknowledged that use and design of library spaces will continuously transform, driven by the changing behaviors and expectations of library users (RLUK 2020, "A Manifesto"). This evolution is due to the diversification of library audiences and, most importantly after witnessing the mass closure of library buildings, the shifting role of the library on campus. Even after lockdown restrictions were lifted, user perceptions of the library's physical spaces were still unclear. One thing is certain: the pandemic will continue to have a long-term impact on how the physical library looks, is arranged, and functions, and libraries will need to keep a close eye on the use of their space.

Furthermore, in order to navigate and influence the digital shift, "research libraries need to continue to work with stakeholders across a wide range of communities within the higher education, information, and commercial sectors" (RLUK 2020, "A Manifesto"). In line with a rapid renovation in the business environment and models accelerated by COVID, librarians also need to develop new relationships with stakeholders. Relating to scholarship and collections, with no access to physical collections, particularly in archives and special collections, libraries had to move quickly to offer online services to their users. The closures experienced through the pandemic demonstrated the importance of e-content and the shift to e-resources had to be instant. E-book collections were added quickly to library collections and copyright terms were relaxed as a response to outcries from academic and educational communities. Collaborative digital collections between libraries offered enhanced opportunities to a wider audience for broader discovery and high-quality research outcomes.

Moreover, I witnessed the rise of a new type of e-book provision that became an overnight success. So-called e-textbook streaming services such as Perlego, Kortex, and Bibliu emerged in the mainstream. The most noticeable service provider among this new type of digital e-resource providers was Perlego. It caught the attention of many academics, students, and librarians by offering free subscriptions to academic institutions during the critical period of the pandemic when students were stuck at home with library closures and many libraries were struggling to provide extensive e-textbook coverage given limited resources and funding.

Perlego

Perlego is a commercial digital textbook library founded in 2016 and launched by two Cambridge graduates, Gautheier van Malderen and Matthew Davis, to offer "all -you-can-read" subscriptions to consumers (Watts 2022). This library is often referred to as "Netflix for textbooks" (Gooding 2018) or "Spotify textbooks" (Tobin 2022), as they adopted an individual subscription model over the internet like these streaming service providers. Therefore, their initial target marketing audience was individuals—the same model Spotify and Netflix use—and students, specifically. They focused on selling private subscriptions to students directly by working in partnership with various commercial companies and education-related organizations such as Barclays Bank, Vodafone (Naik 2020), Talis (an educational technology company)[1] and Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.[2] For example, Barclays Bank student account holders were offered one year's free subscription to Perlego (Ingham 2020) as an opening reward while Vodafone, a British multinational telecommunications company, gave their mobile phone users six weeks of free access to Perlego as part of their mobile package (Vodafone 2020).

Accelerated by COVID, Perlego saw more openness and willingness from publishers as well as an urgency and desperation from academic institutions to provide academic resources online swiftly to students. Perlego reached out to academic libraries in the United Kingdom (Naik 2020) and began making their monthly subscriptions freely available to students via their libraries (Young 2020). Their sales strategy moved from individuals to institutions and enabled universities to buy Perlego subscriptions on behalf of their students.

Personalizing the Pandemic

This change in strategy was a huge departure from their original business model.

From the inception of Perlego, UK librarians were not sure what to think about it, especially since their marketing focus was completely different from traditional publishers and e-resource providers. Bypassing libraries and institutions, they talked to students directly and this driving force was completely outside of librarians' opinion. All libraries could do was sit by uncomfortably and witness that some of their students started not to feel a need to visit institutional libraries, subscribing instead to Perlego. Subscribers felt this resource was sufficient enough to carry out their study successfully without libraries. One small theological seminary librarian, who remained anonymous, was even questioned about the value of her library by her senior management team.

During the pandemic, as Perlego changed its marketing strategy, representatives reached out to libraries offering an indirect subscription model. Soon, librarians purchased Perlego's bulk subscription license on behalf of their students. The librarian who was questioned about her value quickly became a project leader for her institution to work with Perlego e-books. Now, in addition to negotiating the license fees and monitoring usages, she facilitates the reading list creation and works closely with academics to collaborate on reading list management. Another librarian noted that Perlego allows faculty to engage with librarians much more easily through their reading list menu called "Workspace" (interview with Perlego subscriber, 2023). Subsequently, Perelgo's indirect subscription model offered in partnership with universities and small seminaries pushed a huge increase in their sales (Naik 2020).

It would be a mistake to think that Perlego's success originated only from a lucky business opportunity due to the pandemic. Perlego offers affordability and accessibility, especially focusing on disability, ease of use, intuitiveness, a simple subscription model, great coverage of titles (with over one million titles), sleek design, reading list management and referencing options, and offline access for up to 30 downloads. Also, it is popular given the prominence of multidisciplinary research trends in academia. Hence, once academics and students experienced the benefits and convenience of Perlego's e-textbook subscription, there was no going back for libraries.

For small theological seminaries and colleges who lacked funds, purchasing a huge package from international vendors such as EBSCO and ProQuest was rather complicated and costly. However,

Perlego offers a more affordable option with its relatively straight-forward purchasing model. Purchasing licenses is simple and it is easy to distribute these licenses to students as they are transferable to successive cohorts painlessly. Bulk buying functionality allows instant access to Perlego's e-collections. For example, a librarian emailed the ABTAPL group list to get some collective wisdom. He was looking for an e-book and said that this title was seemingly impossible to get as an institutional library. The suggested alternative was subscribing to Perlego for the duration of the module being taught. This was a cheap and cheerful solution that provided access to the text immediately.

Not only is the simplicity of the purchasing model attractive to librarians, but also it saves a lot of time and administrative work where the librarian no longer needs to look at different vendors to see availability or compare costs of different licensing and credit options. In addition, as it is easy to use, work with, and train staff, Perlego lowers the barrier for anyone to become involved in providing e-resources through the library. Therefore, Perlego allows a new way to engage with lecturers regarding course materials, helping them to create reading lists conveniently with less training. It has enhanced relationships between faculty and library staff (interview with Perlego subscriber, 2023). Perlego subscriptions became particularly popular in theological libraries and became a major means of providing e-resources in these institutions in the United Kingdom, reaching approximately 20 percent of ABTAPL members.

In addition to the benefits of using Perlego for students, there are also benefits to publishers who collaborate with Perlego. Often for small publishers who struggle with a lack of funding and technical infrastructure, supplying institutional-level e-books is difficult and complicated. Perlego saw this gap and offered a convenient alternative to these publishers. Publishers outsource their e-book distribution to Perlego and receive royalties according to usage. That is why Perlego has such strong coverage, particularly in theology and religion, as many publishers in these fields are small; they welcome this opportunity by seeing it as a way to publish e-books (Perlego Representative 2023). Some of the titles are not even available as e-books from other vendors; they are only available from Perlego.

Perlego, driven by the digital technology revolution, has compelled librarians, institutions, and publishers to rethink e-book provision in innovative ways, moving away from the traditional, complicated, and complex methods of licensing and credit models. Perlego

provides a convenient digital platform for individual libraries and institutions to meet their students' needs, and for authors to publish their work.

IFLA Trend Report 2021

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) updated its trend report to present ideas shared by emerging library leaders from around the world expressed through a survey in June and July of 2021. The leaders reflected on the COVID-19 pandemic and published their conclusions as *IFLA Trend Report 2021 Update* (2022). This report offers a comprehensive view of the evolving landscape of libraries. It highlighted twenty key trends in the library field with a particular emphasis on the influence of technology and its impact in the digital age. The swift and profound changes in new ways of working and living due to the unexpected crisis left libraries with no option but to adapt rapidly to new realities.

The complexity of the trends from this report, some of which complement one another while others appear to be in conflict, reflects the turbulent and rapid change libraries faced during the pandemic. The abrupt transition to remote working and the challenges of meeting users' growing demands, including a preference to access library services remotely (IFLA 2022, 9), raised questions about the value of physical library spaces and collections. On the contrary, the report pointed out that there was a growing appreciation for these spaces as a research hub for collaboration and discussions (10), and as an antidote for analog experiences, promoting mindfulness and mental balance away from social media (16) to "impatient users" who "will not tolerate slow or confusing process" (15), in particular young, digital natives.

In this digital shift, the rapidity of technological change outpaces existing equipment and services rapidly. Also, the need for equipment replacement, ongoing update costs, and increasing licensing fees threatens small libraries (IFLA 2022, 17) which deepens inequalities and widens divisions (27). These changes and challenges imply that continual training at a high level of education (24) becomes a necessity, hence investment in human resources is required to intensify lifelong learning (21).

The IFLA Trend Report provided some relief and confirmation of experiences to librarians. Its observations affirmed that librarians were not alone in navigating the challenging digital landscape. These trends represent the library's role in a world shaped by technology and underscore the importance of soft skills such as adaptability (11), sustainability (13), and data and information literacy (18, 25). It also pointed out that, although libraries advocate for the Open Access movement, "the rise of open could lead to a sense that there [is] no longer a need for institutions to play the traditional role of libraries in providing an opportunity for people to access works that would otherwise be inaccessible" (26).

This report stated the current trends and predicted trends to come, which will shape the role of library and information professionals in their workplaces. It suggested possible preparations for library and information professionals to navigate the future in order to thrive, not simply to survive. It became a beacon to me as a way to prepare for this new normal with a much clearer perspective.

RLUK Scoping Study

At the same time IFLA published its report, Research Libraries UK in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) presented the results of their major evidence-based research project, *The Role of Academic and Research Libraries As Active Participants and Leaders in the Production of Scholarly Research* (RLUK 2021). It illustrated a detailed overview of the current role of academic and research libraries, explored their potential to step up as partners and leaders in the initiation, production, and dissemination of academic and scholarly research, highlighted barriers and challenges that might hinder this role, and it recommended what steps need to be taken to enhance collaborative research. The report has ten insightful findings and makes 13 practical recommendations for libraries, members of the academic community, parent organizations, RLUK, and the AHRC. The ten findings are:

1. A recognition of the wealth of expertise held by library personnel. As collaborators and leaders in research, library staff, with their pedagogical expertise, technical skills, and

curatorial insight can provide data to researchers to make data-driven decisions (RLUK 2021, 6).

2. Collaboration as a default mode of operation. RLUK found that collaboration is in the nature of library staff, hence in order to foster multidisciplinary research and contribute partnerships, libraries can position themselves as a center of communication and a collaboration hub (6).

3. Conceptions of the meaning of research. Library staff involvement and contributions to research activities are often overlooked due to the different definitions and understanding of what research entails between academic researchers and library staff. This can lead to the contributions of library staff as unrecognized (6).

4. Complementarity of skills, knowledge, and expertise. Library staff skills in public engagement, curation, literature searches, systematic reviews, digital scholarship, technical skills, open access, bibliometrics, and research data management can complement research partners. Therefore collaborative work between libraries and academics benefits both parties equally (7).

5. Understanding engagement as a spectrum. With their skill sets, library staff can be actively involved in research in a variety of different ways, such as a principal investigator or co-investigator. "Library staff add greatest value to research projects when they are involved throughout the research lifecycle, from project formation to the dissemination, and preservation, of outputs" (7).

6. Recognizing the contribution of library staff. Since recognition of library staff as research partners is not always appreciated, initiatives that acknowledge all contributors to research are encouraged[3] but it is still unknown how these efforts will affect library staff (7).

7. Funding eligibility. Not only is it important to formalize library staff involvement in funded projects, but also granting eligibility to apply for UK Research and Innovation[4] research council funding as a co-investigator or principal investigator should be welcome if they fulfill funding criteria (7).

8. Perceptions are shifting. Perceptions of library staff are gradually progressing from service provider to active and equal research partners and leaders (7).

9. Challenges do exist. There are many barriers to expanding library staff roles as research partners and leaders. Everyone in the academic and research communities have to play their part to overcome these challenges in order to empower library staff to reach their potential (7).
10. Opportunities are available to be seized. The digital shift allows many exciting opportunities for libraries to further develop and enhance their role as partners in research (7).

In order to materialize the opportunities for libraries to act as research partners and leaders, RLUK recommended a joint action plan between RLUK and the AHRC as well as library staff themselves to shape and support implementations (RLUK 2021, 57-59). Key points include advocating for library staff, funding professional development programs (57), promoting diversity and recognizing library staff's representation in the research community (57), and encouraging library staff to leverage doctoral research programs to enhance their research capacity (58). It is important to note that advocating for library staff to be eligible for research funding will help them develop their digital capacity, research skills, and credibility (57). Additionally, recommendations included elements of advocacy (58) and collaboration between academic and library staff (59).

Digital Tools for the Digital Shift

Accelerated by COVID, the digital shift is here to stay and it will speed up even more with technological innovation. I believe that the focus of library and information professionals has moved from developing library collections to developing library staff. Digital technologies threaten the traditional role of librarians but at the same time, they open an opportunity for librarians to redefine their roles to meet new academic activities and research methodologies. The global pandemic forced me to accept the current state of the profession. The key to developing our skills is to make use of digital resources and tools. It is time for me to embrace technology as much as I can and to adjust to the digital future. To prepare myself to embrace this digital shift, I started to find out what digital applications were available for me to use during the pandemic.

I charged myself with a mission to equip myself with new technologies, and I mostly turned to freely available digital tools on the web. I wanted to use platforms that were fun and colorful so that my message would stand out effectively to the digital native generation. Given financial constraints, I was limited to learning free or affordable tools, especially ones that are highly popular so that I could teach myself by watching YouTube videos. Also, as I spoke of digital literacy to library users with great enthusiasm, I wanted to practice what I preached by using more digital tools. Following are some of the tools I used.

Zoom

As digital communication was the only way to connect to library users during lockdown, I searched for the most effective tool in order to reach out, and chose Zoom, which "is a communications platform that allows users to connect with video, audio, phone, and chat" (Zoom 2022). Before my parent institution officially offered Microsoft (MS) Teams, I used Zoom to communicate with students. This tool was an affordable and convenient solution to have a face-to-face talk and host group library meetings for training and orientations. It was a good alternative to keep in touch with library users in isolation and show that I was still there to support them by making myself available online regardless of where they were at that time. Furthermore, ABTAPL started a monthly Zoom lunchtime social for casual conversation in order to support one another and facilitate friendships during this difficult time. This gathering time was greatly appreciated by many members.

Kahoot!

An application I used to facilitate fun quizzes during library orientation was Kahoot!, "a game-based learning platform that makes it easy to create, share and play learning games or trivia quizzes in minutes" (Kahoot! n.d.). I launched a quiz after the orientation talk to see whether library users understood the information just presented. Kahoot! allows questions to be answered instantly through users' mobile phones, and it is a great way of collecting feedback with immediate results to find out if there is any need to clarify

information. It helped students consolidate details of library processes and procedures, and students welcomed this digital quiz application and actively participated. As Kahoot! was widely used at schools in the United Kingdom, students were already familiar with the software. This game-based learning platform provides immediate feedback and it gives competitive excitement to learning, which was a big appeal to this digitally receptive generation.

Mentimeter

Mentimeter is a presentation-based tool that can be used to design quizzes, polls, and word clouds online (Mentimeter n.d.). This tool allows interaction with participants to occur in real time as they take a poll, participate in a quiz, and present their thoughts to create a group word cloud. It can be used via a web browser, making it simple to access from nearly any device. Participants can instantly join by simply entering a code or scanning a QR code with their mobile phones or tablets. I used this application during the library training for ABTAPL and Association of European Theological Libraries (BETH) members in order to gather their feedback instantly.

Prezi

Prezi is a digital presentation tool that offers some unique features, making it a good alternative to MS PowerPoint. This sleek software is web-based, running entirely through a web browser so it has fewer compatibility issues with devices. Unlike PowerPoint's slide-based approach, Prezi uses a campus-based style, meaning a presentation moves around, zooming in and out to view various frames on the campus. This different technique of presenting is very eye-catching and visually engaging, but the strongest selling point is that it is free.

The creator of Prezi also offers Prezi Design, which contains many beautiful templates to build on in order to design visually attractive content. I use it heavily to create library booklets, posters, and flyers. The first bulletin for BETH was designed using Prezi Design. You can download the PDF file of this bulletin from *https://bethbulletin.eu/*.

The other Prezi tool I used is Prezi Video. This new video creator allows you to be featured next to the content, a bit like a news broadcast. This function allows you to live stream or record your

presentation seamlessly via Zoom or Teams. The benefit of this tool is that the viewers will be able to see you while you are presenting text and images. This feature keeps viewers engaged.

MS Sway

MS Sway is "a new app from MS Office that makes it easy to create and share interactive reports, personal stories, presentations and more" (MS Sway n.d.). I used it for an interactive collection exhibition. Please see my showcase piece for ABTAPL e-book collections created by MS Sway here: *https://sway.office.com/lYW82u4C5fQaMcpM?ref=Link*

Its built-in design engine allows adding text and images into pre-designed templates, and it easily helps users create professional content that showcases information in an interactive way. It is simple to apply a new style and format so you can save a lot of time on editing. Also, it is straightforward to share with others on the web as it does not require signing in or downloading to view, and it is free to use with an MS account.

Trello

Trello is a web-based, list-making visual application for a team to manage a project, monitor workflows, and track tasks by adding files, checklists, and allocating responsibilities. It works as an electronic collaboration tool that organizes a project on a digital board with movable cards. This tool allows you to see quickly what work there is to do, who is working on it, and how far along it is in the process. I used it with my co-editor to allocate jobs, share files, monitor progress, and check the timelines for the first BETH Bulletin project, which has just been published.

ThingLink

ThingLink is a digital tool to create interactive annotated images in the cloud by adding icons or tags with detailed texts, links to website, vocals, and videos (ThingLink Team 2023). I used it for an interactive library floor plan and instructional guide. Library users simply hover over the floorplan and click on icons where they can get more

detailed information about that particular area. It is free to use and easy to share with others as no login is required to open the page. As an example, see my floor plan here: *https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1486723674131136513?buttonSource=viewLimits*

Powtoon

Powtoon is a cloud-based visual communication software for creating animated presentations and videos. It is very easy to create a short video as it comes with many features including moving avatars, images, video footage, and copyrighted music. It is also simple to share without needing to download, and it allows you to export it to various platforms and devices. It is free to create, use, and share. The presentation video I created using Powtoon can be found here: *https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/cQxrmIr6tZ6/5-fun-tips-to-use-self-circulation/*

Conclusion

I believe that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital shift in research and scholarship in the humanities, including theology and religious studies. The digital shift promotes the emergence of digital scholarship at a rapid speed and this threatens the traditional role of librarians. Digital scholarship instigates a change in the support system traditionally provided by libraries to researchers. The library is no longer simply a place filled with quality collections or librarians who point users in the direction of the right resource. Libraries are required to take a more collaborative approach to the facilitation of digital scholarship. Librarians with digital skills can be the right partners to provide solutions to problems occurring through the lifecycle of a project by delivering pre-existing infrastructure, preserving research products after completion, and considering sustainability. For librarians to fulfill their potential and to equip themselves in areas where they can add value, I believe that the future is bright in the creation, archiving, curation, and preservation of tools for digital humanities research. This way we can confidently prepare users for new programs like the Master's in Digital Theology, which has been running successfully for the last few years at Spurgeon's

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College in London (Spurgeon's College n.d.). We can also expect more publications in the field, such as *Digital Theology: A Computer Science Perspective* (Sutinen and Cooper 2021).

I updated my library's online guide with these visually attractive and interactive applications, which were well received by users, and I had the chance to present on these tools to ABTAPL in a training session in 2022, and to BETH members (ABTAPL's European counterparts) at their virtual conference in 2021, allowing me to share my practices with my colleagues across Europe. This experience gave me a boost of confidence in learning new skills and a positive perspective on this new way of living and working. Exploring these tools was my small first step to continuous, further progress. I am no longer afraid of the wave of new technology. I am actively seeking to learn what is ahead of us, and I am ready to equip myself with new tools in order to deliver and communicate the most appropriate and interesting library service to users in the "new normal."

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Notes

1   *https://talis.com/about-us/*
2   *https://www.ucas.com/about-us/who-we-are*
3   Please see The Hidden REF from *https://hidden-ref.org/* and Technician Commitment *https://www.techniciancommitment.org.uk/*
4   *https://www.ukri.org/*

Panic, Pivot, Plan

Pandemic Course Material Management

ELIZABETH MILLER AND CAITLIN SOMA

*F*rom 2020 through 2023, academic libraries have faced unique challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we all encountered the same global crisis and shared many similarities in our responses to it, the nuances of the settings in which we each found ourselves at its onset shaped our experiences. For us, the context of Pitts Theology Library, which serves the Candler School of Theology, at Emory University became a crucible in which our roles at the Library were transformed and our philosophies of librarianship were forged.

We began our tenure at Pitts in March 2019, Caitlin as the Acquisitions, Serials, and Assessment Librarian, and Elizabeth as the Reserves and Circulation Specialist. Working in different departments on different floors of the building, our primary professional interaction was the rare physical book purchase request for a course reserve item not already owned by the Library. However, over the

next several years, our roles became increasingly linked as courses required more digital resources, a reality new to us and to faculty and students.

Like many colleagues in theological education, we see our work as theological librarians as a form of pastoral care and ministry, "tending" to the Candler community and "cultivating" the intellectual and spiritual lives of our students (Kornfeld 2005, 209). We borrow this gardening metaphor from Margaret Zipse Kornfeld, who conceptualizes pastoral caregivers as gardeners/tools, communities as ground, religious tradition as soil, and people in the community as plants (Kornfeld 2005, 209-214). As public and technical services librarians, we work to enable research and learning in our community, despite major differences in our day-to-day tasks. By being embedded in the Candler School of Theology, we can see the fruits of our labor as students and faculty meet their research and learning goals, community members attend our events, and patrons visit the library to engage with our materials.

However, viewing your job as ministry, and therefore inherently good, can come with unintended mental health consequences. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we found these consequences magnified and their causes clarified, as we became increasingly aware of the role of vocational awe in our work. Vocational awe was first explained by Fobazi Ettarh as the idea that libraries are "good and sacred," and librarianship is a "sacred calling. . . regardless of any negative effect on the librarians' own lives" (2018). Many theological librarians come to the profession through bi-vocational avenues, both spiritual and intellectual, making our work substantially more personal and meaningful than just a paycheck. The self-sacrificial impulse from librarianship combined with training as pastoral caregivers increases the likelihood that theological librarians will fall victim to vocational awe, often tending to their own well-being after that of their patrons. In theological librarianship at a seminary, the burden of the spiritual formation of patrons is also placed upon the already overwhelming responsibilities of information access. The nature of these enormous expectations has long been recognized, with Raymond Morris writing in the *Proceedings of the Seventh Conference of the American Theological Library Association*, "Theological librarianship is at its best a ministry," and going on to note, after describing a difficult but not unusual day, "One does not go through that kind of a day without spending himself. You don't do these things without giving of yourself. I went home tired and

nervously exhausted" (Morris 1953, 33). It's easy to see how the challenges of a profession that already falls victim to the perception of secular "sacredness" that Ettarh describes would be exacerbated by incorporating religion and ministry into the nature of the work. Commenting on Morris' work nearly 70 years later, Karl Stutzman wrote that "even in the positive framing of librarianship as ministry… there are hints of the possible exploitation of library workers" (Stutzman 2022, 27). With a global pandemic further heightening the significant responsibilities placed on theological librarians, the role of vocational awe in librarian mental health became even more apparent.

Context

The Candler School of Theology, located in Atlanta, Georgia, is one of 13 United Methodist seminaries in the United States. A part of Emory University, Candler offers multiple graduate degree programs, including the Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies, and a distance education Doctor of Ministry program. Like many other seminaries, Candler has a library specifically devoted to collecting theological materials and supporting the learning and research needs of the community. At Candler, this is Pitts Theology Library. Located physically and organizationally within the Candler School of Theology, Pitts Theology Library's mission is to acquire, organize, preserve, interpret, and provide access to information resources that support the present and future teaching, research, and service missions of the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and the public. This mission informed the service models, staffing, and organizational structure of the Library during the time recounted in this chapter.

The mission statement suggests two imperatives for Pitts staff: stewardship and service. Wallace Koehler identifies the intrinsic tension between these two objectives—stewardship focuses on the security and preservation of items, while service relies upon Ranganathan's first law of library science: "Books are for use" (Koehler 2015; Ranganathan 1957, 26, 111). To avoid addressing this tension, many libraries divide labor along the line between stewardship and service. At pre-pandemic Pitts, technical services largely handled the stewardship elements of the Library from the

fifth floor, while public services managed the patron-facing services on the public second floor, and rarely did the two meet. In this old-fashioned model of librarianship, departments worked toward the same overall objectives but were often on parallel tracks in the day-to-day work. Technical services work went unseen by patrons, while public services staff were always visible, even in their offices. There were—and still are—major differences between the work of public and technical services librarians. However, the structure of the Library and the work itself has morphed to reflect the changes happening at Candler and in theological education and librarianship more broadly. As this chapter will explore, one of the biggest factors in these changes was the enormous influx of digital materials since the pandemic and how that shift has blurred many of the existing lines between library departments.

The work of both acquisitions and course reserves was (and still is) hidden from most library users. Patrons can submit an online form requesting new book purchases and faculty and students see their textbooks appear on the course reserves shelves, all without knowing anything about the process or people who do that work. For many teaching faculty, the Library, and specifically the Course Reserves Specialist, was seen as the great problem-solver, filling the shelves and electronic reserves seemingly by magic. This is an example of the perception of "librarian as saint" that Fobazi Ettarh explains in her essay "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves" (2018). Ettarh also explains the harmful role that this plays in librarian health, writing "Awe is easily weaponized against the worker, allowing anyone to deploy a vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint" (Ettarh 2018). Invisible labor, panic, and vocational awe all contributed to the growing toxicity of our work as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

Due to the bi-vocational nature of theological librarianship, the COVID-19 pandemic tasked librarians with not just helping students complete the semester strong academically, but also ensuring that the resources available contributed to their spiritual formation. While balancing these pressures, the relationships that helped librarians tend their aforementioned spiritual gardens were ripped away, replaced with lifeless digital ticketing systems and the cold comfort of listserv emails insisting everyone was all in this together. Pastoral care educators offered reminders that "[we] are not alone, and it is necessary for [us] to grasp this truth. Counselors and caregivers

become susceptible to burnout when they believe they must do the work alone" (Kornfeld 2005, 215). It becomes difficult to maintain the requisite conditions for a healthy garden when coming into an empty library each day. Feeling entirely alone, the stress, sadness, and burnout began to take root, as we will address later in this chapter.

Acquisitions

When she began working at Pitts, Caitlin's role was that of the Acquisitions, Serials, and Assessment Librarian. This meant that she took responsibility for purchasing and managing subscriptions for all of the print and electronic materials of the Library's circulating, reference, and periodical collections. She also handled the Library's assessment activities, including the annual Library survey and compiling data for accreditation reports. At the time, print materials made up the majority of the role. Pitts Theology Library had more than 600 print periodical subscriptions and primarily purchased print books for the collection. She had been working on gradually increasing the Library's online resource offerings but preferred to prioritize larger database purchases over individual titles. This strategy was helpful for both staff and patrons, since theology patrons were not well versed in using electronic resources, and Pitts did not have an electronic resources librarian to manage these resources. By focusing on acquiring larger databases, reference librarians could effectively teach patrons to navigate resources within specific platforms and library staff only had to import records and activate resources a few times a year when there were big purchases.

To manage the incoming print materials, Caitlin had a team of four students working on acquisitions and periodicals. This team was a mix of undergraduate and graduate students who made it possible to handle the large volume of print materials with only one full-time staff person in the department. Caitlin trained these students in Alma and GOBI software and carrying out duties such as duplicate-checking book orders, sorting and processing incoming mail, receiving books and periodicals, preparing invoices and renewals, and processing print periodicals for binding. They also completed other projects, including auditing monograph series, conducting condition assessments, and assisting with Library-wide endeavors like the annual book sale. The acquisitions and periodicals office

was located on the fifth floor of the Library, while the stacks and circulation desk were on the first and second floors. Students worked between the fifth and second floors, receiving materials on the fifth floor and shelving periodicals and prepping them for binding on the second floor. This arrangement meant that although library patrons saw people working in the periodicals section, they were not aware of the acquisitions work that primarily took place upstairs. This partial awareness contributed to a skewed perception of the amount of labor required to run this area of the Library, since it is easy to assume that the visible work is the only work happening.

At the beginning of the spring 2020 semester, before the onset of the pandemic, the acquisitions and periodicals student team had a range of experience levels, from three years to one semester, and they worked effectively both independently and collaboratively. Each student worked 10-15 hours per week and was typically busy during a shift, but the amount of work was never truly overwhelming for either the students or the librarian who supervised them. As part of their training, Caitlin told students that there is no such thing as a library emergency in their roles. If they got to the end of their shift and there were still boxes of books and stacks of periodicals to process, despite them working hard throughout the shift, it was not a problem. There were procedures in place to handle anything that needed to be rushed, and the rest could wait. Because undergraduate and graduate students already tend to have higher than average stress levels, it was important to Caitlin that their job at the Library not add to this stress. Their training emphasized the importance of their job to Library operations, but also noted that their education and well-being should always be their priority. With acquisitions and periodicals work, it is also especially important that everything be completed accurately, and stress inevitably leads to a reduction in attention to detail. In pursuit of this goal, the acquisitions and periodicals office was a calm but collegial area where students and staff worked companionably.

Course Reserves

Elizabeth's initial role at Pitts was that of the Reserves and Circulation Specialist. In this role, she was responsible for managing course materials for all courses taught at the Candler School of Theology both curricular and non-degree, as well as supervising and staffing

the circulation desk for about half of her time. Candler courses were typically offered as in-person sessions, the only exception being a handful of online Doctor of Ministry (DMin) courses each semester. DMin students were offered additional library privileges, made possible only due to the small size of the cohort. With this composition of the student body, librarians created course reserves policies and practices to meet the needs of a predominantly in-person patron base.

Prior to the 2019-2020 academic year, course reserves were mostly physical books, often numbering over 1,400 books per year, shelved behind the circulation desk with a three-hour loan period. This system was put into place to prevent a single patron from having the Library's copy of a textbook for the entire semester and was intended to provide supplementary access to course materials. The Library also scanned and licensed selections from books to further supplement the course readings, but electronic items were generally limited.

To standardize student access to course materials and enable librarians to license scanned materials, Emory required (and still requires) course instructors to use the course reserves software, which is conveniently embedded in the university's learning management system. However, course reserves were never intended to replace the need for students to purchase or otherwise procure their own long-term access to course materials. Course reserves at Candler played a bigger role in students' lives than in many other divisions at Emory. At Candler, 98 percent of all students and 100 percent of Master of Divinity students received financial aid. Although this financial support helped defray the high cost of a seminary education, book costs presented a significant barrier to many students. Course reserves became a way to reduce this financial burden, and students took full advantage of this service, with many relying wholly on Library resources. By spring 2020, books for introductory seminars were being checked out as often as a dozen times daily.

In an effort to support students as they grew more reliant upon the Library, course reserves operated under a concierge model. Each semester, Elizabeth scoured the textbook adoption system for each Candler course and individually entered and routed the books for processing and reserves shelving. In this case, faculty only had to complete their textbook adoptions at the bookstore in order for their books to appear on the course reserves shelves, adding to the magic of it all. Faculty were also able to submit requests via email, often just sending syllabi for individual parsing and processing. Each course

took several hours to process between physical book requests and the workflow for scanning reserves selections, not including waiting for books to be delivered from other Emory library locations and remote storage.

Under the concierge model, the Reserves Specialist often worked *for* faculty rather than *with* faculty. There were few requirements for faculty to submit requests, and the deadlines were only loosely enforced. It was a benefit to all parties if the reserves were entered into the system properly, which meant it generally had to be done by the Specialist. Students benefited because materials were processed quickly and accurately and were easy to find with consistent formatting, and faculty benefited because their course materials were available in a timely manner with little input or oversight. For the Library, having teaching faculty submit requests themselves was time-consuming due to input errors, so allowing the Specialist to take care of reserves herself became the path of least resistance, as opposed to hosting ill-attended training sessions. Maintaining this level of productivity and service felt defeating, as the labor put in was completely invisible and the output often criticized for its lack of convenience.

Generally, reserves work was all handled without student assistance, only occasionally enlisting circulation desk students to scan materials during the beginning-of-semester rush and removing stickers from the physical books at the close of each term. Physical book processing, the easiest of the reserves processes, required the Specialist to manually input each book into the course reserves system, place a hold on the book, pull the book from the stacks, recall it from a patron, or have it shipped from another campus library. Then, she had to place reserves stickers on the books, assign them a three-hour loan status, and shelve them behind the circulation desk. Scanning books required the same process, but instead of shelving the books, the Specialist then had to digitize the requested pages, perform quality control and copyright compliance checks on each scan, and upload the completed scans into the system. Fully digital items, like e-books and database articles, required manually inputting bibliographic information and proxied links into the reserves system. Realistically, this meant that one staff person was handling over 1,400 physical books and 1,100 scans for 250 courses per academic year. Considering an average work week and the hours of work required to process each course's materials, it became clear that this workload was unsustainable.

The seemingly servile nature of this service model was softened by the relationships that the Specialist built with faculty members through interactions via email, phone calls, and office visits. Faculty would regularly see Elizabeth at the circulation desk or stop by her office with a question about their course reserves. In this way, relationships were created that made the Course Reserve Specialist part of the larger culture of Candler. She was one of the most well-known people at the Library, a problem-solver who could save the day when somebody needed a course resource on short notice. Although this perception was gratifying, when the pandemic came and reserves moved online, the perception of the Reserves Specialist as the one solution to everyone's problems persisted, while the relationships themselves were lost.

Pandemic Panic

On March 11, 2020, Emory University announced that it would transition to remote learning for all graduate and undergraduate classes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, extending spring break by one week to allow time to prepare for the transition. Despite the global upheaval, higher education continued on as it had always been, just shifting to virtual coursework. Alongside the commitments to keep classes running, administrators expected libraries to continue making resources available for students and researchers. From the day that Emory announced the remote learning transition, libraries across the university received panicked emails and phone calls from faculty members concerned both for their students and for their own access to library resources. Although the entire world was facing unprecedented challenges, there was also somehow the bizarre expectation that higher education would still operate under business as usual, with students still expected to complete coursework and staff still expected to find ways to support them.

On Thursday, March 19, 2020, Pitts Theology Library shifted to a request and retrieval-only model for access to the circulating collection. An email to staff and faculty explained, "There will be no physical access to the library space, but all Emory faculty, staff, and students can make requests for circulating books. Items will be pulled by Pitts staff and held at the circulation desk." This transition represented an enormous shift in staff workloads and priorities, but most

notably, this model did not work for course reserve books. Because staff had to receive a request, go pull the books, notify the patron, and then the patron had to make a special trip to campus to pick up the requested items, three-hour loans did not make sense for either patrons or staff. Patrons and staff alike were panicking that the campus had shut down and there was no longer access to the Library space. How were the students who were relying upon course reserves supposed to finish their courses without their course readings?

Higher education administrators did not seem to fully understand the massive infrastructure changes required for online education. Many universities' decisions indicated that administrators thought that moving all classes online would allow things to continue as usual. In retrospect, this idea was both short-sighted and misguided, since online courses require a lot of in-person support. For course reserves, this need for extensive support was especially true for items that were not available as electronic resources, or were too expensive to purchase in that format, forcing staff to find creative ways to electronically access materials.

The first method we pursued to provide remote access to course reserves was purchasing e-books. The Course Reserves Specialist and the Acquisitions, Serials, and Assessment Librarian immediately searched for digital copies of every print book that was assigned for a Candler School of Theology course. Working extraordinarily quickly, these librarians were able to process hundreds of titles in less than a day. However, since the semester was already halfway over, there was a possibility that some books would not be used during the remainder of the semester. To prevent any more emergency spending than was absolutely necessary, the Library Director sent out lists of the titles available as e-books to faculty members and asked them to identify the titles that were necessary for their students to finish the term. This communication let faculty know that the Library was working to support them, explained the limits of acquiring electronic resources, and kept the Library from buying superfluous e-books.

In addition to purchasing e-books, Caitlin took advantage of offers from publishers who had expanded access to online resources to assist during the crisis. Librarians across the country put together shared documents detailing the various offers that were available. Caitlin reviewed these options and worked with reference librarians to communicate their availability to students and faculty. This review helped with access to certain key resources, but also created additional layers of complexity in terms of resource availability.

Most initial emergency resource offerings had an expiration date of June or July 2020, which meant that they would not be available in future semesters, and the fluctuating availability caused confusion among patrons. Even with these efforts, purchasing e-books and activating emergency access materials did not come close to getting all of the resources needed for the spring 2020 courses. After buying all of the e-books possible, staff turned to scanning sections of the print books within the library. A skeleton crew of dedicated library staff and student assistants scanned and licensed thousands of excerpts and uploaded them into the electronic reserves system. Patrons were always pleased to hear that more items were available than anticipated, but this had an unforeseen downside. Suddenly being able to provide things previously deemed inaccessible gave the same misguided impression that Morris wrote about 70 years ago—that theological librarians "are the good angels who can, with almost a stroke of magic, uncover the needed book, or identify the garbled quotation" (Morris, 33). By providing exceptional patron service during a time of global panic, library staff unintentionally set a standard for themselves that would be impossible to maintain in the coming years.

Policy and Procedure Pivots

As the pandemic progressed, Pitts Theology Library established new policies and adapted services in response to the changes in policy from the University. It was hard to know the importance of the work in a context where being physically at the Library felt both essential and frivolous, but the work needed to be done and people needed to be in the Library to do it.

Circumstances also required changing the way that student assistants worked in circulation assisting with course reserves and in acquisitions and periodicals. When pandemic restrictions were first put in place and the campus closed, students' lives were upended. Most student jobs were dependent on being on campus, but many students were not able to come to campus. All four acquisitions students stopped working for the semester and only two of the previous fifteen circulation students remained able to come to campus. For course reserves, this change to staffing levels meant that there were only two remaining circulation students available to assist with the

new duties of request and retrieval services and scanning course materials.

Students did not return to work in acquisitions until the fall of 2020. During this time, "doing the work alone," (Kornfeld 2005, 215) became the order of the day. Much like the gardener-counselors in Kornfeld's work, theological librarians felt obligated to work through difficulties and rely only upon themselves to meet patron needs, rapidly leading to burnout and isolation. Without the help of student workers and other support systems, this effect became more acute. Even when students did return, University restrictions on their ability to come to campus meant only one student could work on campus and the other acquisitions student had to work remotely. This restriction halved the number of student workers compared to the period prior to the pandemic. Campus access limitations and high stress levels of students made it difficult to find students to work, so having these two students available at all was a stroke of fortune. The on-campus student was needed to process the hundreds of back-logged periodicals and print book acquisitions, so assisting with electronic resources fell to the remote student. For the on-campus student, it was sobering to see a workload that had once been busy but manageable become seemingly insurmountable. A work area where previously staff were able to come and go while chatting or commenting on new library materials became one where a sole student methodically plowed through a literal mountain of books and periodicals. There were still no library emergencies with his work, but now the whole world felt like an emergency. The silence of the previously chatty work environment now felt apocalyptic.

Although having students was helpful, it required creating entirely new processes for managing a student remotely. Because remote student work was only permitted due to a COVID exception, the expectations for managing their work were high and there were no existing procedures to fall back on. To meet these requirements, Caitlin scheduled working hours with the remote student and checked in with him at the beginning and end of every shift to assign work, provide training, answer questions, and address anything else that arose. Like the rest of us, the remote student did not have much experience with online resources; he required a lot of supervision, but once trained, his work was extremely valuable for taking the Library into the maintenance phase of pandemic e-book purchasing. Throughout the next few semesters, he helped keep track of the changing licenses from the emergency access e-books, remotely

duplicate-checked print orders when they resumed, and assisted with reviewing the myriad online e-book packages that now needed consideration. With the exception of duplicate-checking orders, all of these were new duties for the Acquisitions Department, and they were now being conducted with an eye toward speed and accuracy.

The addition of regular e-book purchasing to the Acquisitions Department's duties dramatically changed the nature of the work. In addition to managing one-time purchases of e-books, Caitlin needed to figure out the most efficient and cost-effective way to bulk up the overall electronic resource offerings. Many vendors had begun advertising electronic resource packages specifically targeting academic libraries struggling to support the switch to remote learning. With the help of the remote student assistant, Caitlin reviewed these packages for content, access, and licensing, and purchased several of them for the Library. This process became something of a crash course in licensing and negotiations. Previously, the Library had worked with vendors on things like expanded access to content and bulk rate discounts, but never under the dire circumstances of the pandemic. Licensing terms, like unlimited simultaneous users and availability of downloadable content, that used to be "nice to have" when purchasing electronic materials were now deal-breakers for the Library, but without backup methods of getting the material, the Library had to either accept the terms available or find a way to live without the content. Working closely with publishers and vendors became a necessity as staff tried to come up with creative ways to get resources for patrons.

One of the biggest successes in this area came when a faculty member especially committed to textbook affordability assigned her own book to a class. The book was a recent publication and fairly expensive, and although the professor wanted her class to read it, she did not want them to have to purchase anything for which she received a kickback. She proactively reached out to the Library months before her class and asked if there was anything Pitts could do about getting access to this book. Unfortunately, the e-book was only available with a single-user license, which is unworkable as a course reserve. Caitlin told her the bad news, but instead of insisting that the Library find a way to make the book available, the professor asked how she, as the author, could help get the purchase options changed. It is difficult to overstate how revolutionary this was. By asking the question, she was recognizing the librarians' role as partners in the cultivation of theological education. Her simple request cut through the miasma

of vocational awe in which staff had been working and energized the groups to work collaboratively; the Library, the professor, the publisher, and the e-book vendor together got the license changed. After several long email threads in which the professor explained her plight and leaned on her contracts with the publisher, they agreed to change the license available for library purchase to an unlimited simultaneous user, DRM-free e-book license, the Library's gold standard for e-book purchases.

Just as staff were acclimating to the most recent iteration of the "new normal," they were collectively thrown another challenge. On December 28, 2021, while the University was closed for winter break, Emory University announced that due to an increase in COVID-19 cases as a result of the Omicron variant, the spring 2022 semester would be starting remotely for a month before resuming on-campus instruction on January 31. This decision helped protect the health of Emory students, faculty, and staff, but it drastically impacted the carefully planned course reserve policies for the coming semester, and that was an enormous blow to morale. The last time there had been an email like this, it had been the first step in a year and a half of uncertainty, upheaval, and tragedy. Pivoting again with just a week of notice sent many staff members back to the mental and emotional state of March 2020. Because of this, they came up with plans not only for January 2022 but also contingencies in case the university did not resume in-person instruction that semester at all.

For January 2022, it was necessary to plan for the first three weeks of regular semester courses and the entirety of J-Term courses. J-Term courses are intensive courses that are offered during the first week of January, before the start of the spring semester. These courses shifting to online instruction was especially concerning because they began the same day that staff were scheduled to return to campus. Further complicating this, staff were not supposed to work during official University holidays, so processing could not begin until the day classes began. For these courses, Elizabeth searched the catalog for existing electronic versions of textbooks and then sent the remainder to Caitlin. Caitlin then looked for electronic versions of the rest of the textbooks. Unfortunately, relatively few e-books were available to be purchased for J-Term courses, since instructors were planning on students being able to use texts that were only available in print at the Library. For regular semester courses, library staff worked with faculty to identify texts that were particularly important for the first weeks of classes so that the Library could prioritize

access to these resources. For these texts, library staff licensed and uploaded portions of assigned texts to provide readings for the first few weeks of classes. This process was the best way available to provide access, but it would be unsustainable financially if classes remained remote. After the first few weeks, scans would begin to hit copyright licensing limits, and the continued strain of limited staffing with ramped-up scanning demands would again make providing other library services difficult.

On January 31, 2022, in-person classes resumed at Candler School of Theology. The fears for a second unplanned fully remote semester were not realized, but the impact of this potential shift was notable. It demonstrated the need for instructors to maintain awareness of the electronic availability of required texts regardless of the intended mode of instruction for their courses. It also made clear that library staff had set a dangerous precedent during March 2020. Staff had shown that despite unimaginably difficult circumstances, the Library would do everything possible to provide students with access to textbooks. However, the Library had only been able to accomplish this due to a combination of emergency policies, the temporary cessation of other services, and adrenaline-fueled staff overwork. The expectation that library staff could, in January 2022, immediately pivot back to the once-in-a-lifetime emergency-induced services provided in spring 2020 is an example of how vocational awe set unattainable expectations for librarians in a post-pandemic world. Ettarh explains, "Awe is not a comforting feeling, but a fearful and overwhelming one" (2018). The idea that Library staff might repeatedly be expected to match the level of service provided in spring 2020 with the same limited notice about the change was indeed both overwhelming and fear-inducing.

Where Expectations Meet Reality

As described in the section *Pandemic Panic,* the quality and speed of the pandemic response inadvertently set very high expectations for electronic course materials. Despite concerns about fulfilling course needs, the Library was able to provide much more content than initially expected. However, the amount of work it took to make this happen was not made clear to the larger campus community, and there was little understanding among students and faculty of the

labor needed to acquire e-books and the licensing limitations of such resources. For all the upheaval and uncertainty that staff had faced, students and faculty were in equally difficult positions. They had not expected to be studying and teaching remotely, and many were ill-equipped to do so from both a logistical and technical perspective. As semesters with both in-person and online courses continued throughout the pandemic, it became clear that the Candler community expected the Library to provide all course materials electronically. However, there were many limitations on electronic resources that the community did not understand.

During the pandemic's building closures and vaccination requirements for campus access, there arose a misconception that because electronic resources were more convenient for patrons than print materials, they were also easier for librarians to manage. Anyone who has ever worked with electronic resources knows the opposite to be true. For course reserves especially, the difference in effort between placing a physical book on reserve and scanning, uploading, and licensing content from the same book was hours of work. Additionally, there were misconceptions about the availability of electronic editions of books. Faculty wanted to use the same titles they had previously taught from, not realizing that those titles had not been released as library-licensed e-books. Library staff had many conversations with faculty, explaining that they were not trying to limit what material faculty could teach, but were facing circumstances far beyond the Library's control that dictated what material was available. Faculty would see titles available on Amazon as Kindle editions and wonder why the Library could not get those e-books for their courses. Other e-books would be available for libraries, but only with single-user licenses, which would never work as a course reserve item when an entire class may need simultaneous access.

In addition to difficulties with the initial purchases of e-books, there were also workflow challenges in making them available. On one of the first large e-book orders in the spring of 2020, technical services' inexperience in managing e-books led to a great deal of wasted time and energy when both time and energy came at a premium for everyone. Staff had not realized that our e-book vendor was making records available via FTP server free of charge as an emergency pandemic measure. After acquisitions ordered a large number of e-books, the cataloging staff manually imported the records before receiving a link to download them just a few days later. All

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of the catalogers' work had been unnecessary! Although librarians resolved the workflow issues after this experience, this shows what it was like working in library technical services in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and is also an important example of the difficulty of job creep that staff are still facing. Processes and workflows that had been carefully considered for years prior had to be thrown out. Worried and stressed people had to pivot to areas in which they were inexperienced, and the lack of experience led to mistakes, causing more work and more stress. Practically speaking, technical services librarians were not on the "front lines" of COVID. They did not face the health risks from patron interactions that public services librarians encountered, and they were able to work from home with less overall disruption to their jobs. However, the long-ranging impact of the pandemic on technical services should not be understated. Because supporting Candler School of Theology courses is a primary mission of the Library, the workflows surrounding the materials for these courses impacted every part of the Library.

Through all of these difficulties in providing the electronic materials, there were also difficulties with patrons using them. The general perception was that electronic resources were readily available and easy to use, though there was a competing expectation that librarians would need to facilitate their use. During this time, reference transactions became less about the details of conducting graduate-level research and more about how to access online resources. Reference librarians patiently guided patrons through the complexities of VPNs, proxy servers, and a variety of e-book and e-journal platforms. Because the demographics of Candler's student population made them less likely to be digital natives than the average graduate student, librarians fought an uphill battle simply by teaching students to use the resources that were already a struggle to procure. Electronic resources, while the perfect solution in theory, proved to be difficult for faculty, students, and librarians alike.

The compounding expectations of librarians during this time can be characterized as an extreme form of job creep as a crisis response mechanism. Staff could not make the library a safe physical space, but they could acquire electronic resources and teach patrons how to use them from a distance. For many librarians, expanded service models were a form of panic. They catastrophized about the potential outcomes if students could not access the resources they needed, and filled those imagined gaps by spreading themselves thinner and thinner. By the time there was a true return to campus, library jobs

had expanded so much that it was difficult to imagine how manage-able workloads could return.

Staff Well-Being

The negative impacts of the workflow disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic go deeper than simple one-time misunder-standings. Librarians as a group have a higher-than-average fear of making mistakes, a psychological phenomenon that has been linked to burnout among academic librarians (Reno 2023, 161). Although Lindsay Reno notes that explanations for this fear are varied, a sig-nificant contributing factor is the role of vocational awe in librari-anship. Reno (2023) suggests, and the authors agree, that vocational awe places librarians upon a pedestal that attaches personal value to the profession. Librarians are taught from an early stage of their careers that their profession is one of accuracy and precision. They are taught that their value comes from their ability to complete tasks accurately, to guide patrons correctly, and to do all of this efficiently, because time and budgets are limited. When they make mistakes, no matter how big or small, it can feel as though they are not simply making an error, but that they are diminishing their value.

In the crisis circumstances of the pandemic, making mistakes is unavoidable. However, these circumstances, combined with the existing fear of making mistakes among academic librarians, cre-ated an environment conducive to burnout. When the Library closed to patrons, the many relationships with faculty and students were lost. Along with this, staff lost a key component of what Reno calls "positive error management," in which "an employee contextual-izes their mistake in a positive way and holds positive beliefs about their mistake [and] believes that they can learn from their mistake and that it can have a positive outcome" (Reno 2023, 163). The cir-cumstances of the pandemic made it very difficult to believe in posi-tive outcomes since Library staff frequently saw only their patrons' unmet needs and criticism. Working in acquisitions and course reserves during COVID-19 was like trying to feed an insatiable beast. No matter how many electronic resources were purchased and scans delivered, there were always more requests. This seeming inability to meet patron needs, combined with the missteps born of significant

job creep, made it feel as though the deeply embedded fear of letting down the profession was being realized.

As the Library moved through the pandemic and into the cessation of most of the emergency response measures, the need to plan for the additional work required to keep up with these expectations became clear. As demonstrated, offering e-books at the same levels as 2020 was not feasible long-term for a number of reasons, not least of which is staff time. In 2020, staff were able to make this magic happen with a mixture of overwork, adrenaline, and partial suspension of other duties. With the resumption of duties like service desk supervision, it became impossible to continue providing e-books the same way while maintaining library services. In order to codify the necessary limitations for e-books, staff established policies for what types of e-books would and would not be purchased for various parts of the library collection. For course reserves, policies established that the Library would only purchase course materials as e-books if the course was being offered online. If students were required to come to campus to attend class, logic follows that they should be able to come to the Library, located in the same building as their College, to get a physical course reserve book. For general acquisitions, policies required that e-books meet a certain standard of demonstrated need before they would be added to the collection. In both cases, there were also licensing standards and price limits that had to be upheld.

Establishing e-book policies helped set boundaries on what the Library was able to provide for these new course formats, but it was ultimately necessary to comprehensively evaluate services and staff to realign them with the new expectations and priorities of the School of Theology. As part of this process, Elizabeth was promoted to Coordinator of Digital Initiatives, moving her into a newly established Digital Initiatives Department, and shifting course reserves responsibilities to the Resource Sharing Coordinator, who was previously the Interlibrary Loan and Circulation Specialist. These changes also made Caitlin the Head of Acquisitions and Access Services, which placed Acquisitions and Course Reserves within the same department.

The experience of the 2022-2023 academic year demonstrated how much the Library has changed since the start of the pandemic and showed the necessity of this reorganization. Even though the majority of courses at Candler were taught in person, physical course reserves have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. This shift required additional work to place items on electronic reserve because they needed

to be scanned or purchased electronically. Student use of the Library also changed this year, with fewer students coming to the Library in person and more students relying on electronic resources, regardless of whether they were taking online courses. Along these same lines, circulation of print materials fell by 40 percent when compared to 2019, the most recent non-pandemic-impacted year for which there is data. All of this means that public services and acquisitions have become more linked together than ever before at Pitts Theology Library. Patrons are increasingly engaging with the Library in a primarily digital format, which means that the electronic collections are playing a larger role than ever in the perception and function of the Library.

Here We Stand

As the Library ramps up electronic services and resources to support the growing population of remote students, we wonder: is it still the Library's responsibility to provide all course materials to students like we had been doing before the pandemic closures? Even if not always convenient, students were able to access all their course materials for free, whether by checking out a copy of the book from the reserves shelves, visiting an Emory-licensed database, or accessing a licensed scan uploaded to electronic reserves. Is this still a feasible expectation for librarians, faculty, and students in the reality of remote programs? With remote students located far from campus, they would certainly not be able to check out short-term loans, and we are not able to provide all materials electronically. Perhaps more important than a concrete answer to that question is addressing what amount of autonomy we, as librarians, have in determining our role in online learning.

In the spring of 2022, conversations started about creating permanent online programs, expanding the small, existing cohort of hybrid students. Throughout the semester, librarians advocated to be part of the conversation regarding modes of instruction at Candler School of Theology. We provided testimonials to the Dean of Faculty showing the difficulty of supporting online and in-person courses simultaneously, highlighting the distinct resource needs of each format and the many limitations we face in providing access to electronic materials. Caitlin spoke at two faculty meetings, once highlighting

a significant new read and publish agreement, and once as part of a presentation on Library support for digital research and teaching. It was incredibly important that librarians had an active voice during this period when the "new normal" was still being invented.

Informed by these conversations, Candler School of Theology welcomed the first cohort of the new hybrid Master of Divinity program in fall 2023. This program represents the larger shift in theological education towards flexible learning formats. The hybrid Master of Divinity will join four other hybrid and online degrees at Candler, leaving only one degree program (Master of Theological Studies) that requires full-time on-campus study. As part of the Library's mission to support Candler School of Theology, we will also support these online programs. Because the pandemic was our first experience supporting online learning, it can be difficult to disentangle those negative experiences from those of remote learning in general, but preparing for this change has allowed us to implement many of the important lessons we learned in the days of pandemic closures.

Thanks to librarian advocacy, we have plans in place to support the new online programs at Candler and the backing from campus administration to implement them. Even with our pandemic experience and planning, we will still be learning while we grow into our new organizational structure and learn the real-time needs of remote students. Although we would not like to revisit any of our experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our panicked responses and quick pivots from that time have helped us create a more sustainable plan for the way forward.

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Spiritual Resonance in a Virtual Age

Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias *and the Limitations of Digitized Primary Resources*

BENJAMIN DUECK

*T*he COVID-19 pandemic has shed new light on the ways in which our professional lives are entwined with technology. As remote work and learning arrangements arose alongside lockdowns and related public health measures, dependence on virtual modes became more intimate and complex. In line with these trends, public and academic libraries across North America are placing great emphasis on the acquisition of e-books, online journals, and other electronic resources. After all, these materials pose several advantages in the current techno-economic climate: they are convenient, quick to order, and readily available to library users who are accessing collections remotely. However, in my time working as an academic religious studies librarian, I have come to find that my community does not always share in this enthusiasm for screen-based research. To provide context for these observations, I will engage in a close study of the *Scivias*, the first major work by the

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visionary Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Through this inquiry, I argue that the desktop-based interfaces that are used to mediate access to digitized primary resources in and beyond the library dilute what I refer to in this chapter as *spiritual resonance*: the process of thinking, feeling, and intuitive understanding by which individuals come to attune to an information artifact's network of symbolic meaning.

I begin by reflecting on how my experiences working with researchers as a liaison librarian inspired me to write this chapter. Next, I summarize the extraordinary life of Saint Hildegard of Bingen and discuss how the *Scivias* provides us with a microcosmic snapshot of the cosmology of the High Middle Ages. To tie this history back to contemporary librarianship, I draw on the communication theory of Marshall McLuhan to explore how our current digital devices reinforce a mode of visual perception that accents disaggregated content over aesthetic form. I proceed to show how these design biases mirror certain metaphysical assumptions from the modern era by relating Hildegard of Bingen's holistic cosmology to the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. To conclude, I discuss how Virtual Reality (VR) technologies can be used to provide more immersive and interactive experiences for library users. While I cannot hope to offer a comprehensive solution to the many complications that the pandemic poses to our profession, I hope that my chapter helps to reframe this uncertain moment in a way that is meaningful and constructive.

Reflections from the Pandemic

As a young librarian whose career began during the pandemic, I do not have enough experience to speak of how my normal routines were disrupted by COVID-19. But despite my newness to the profession, the social and economic shifts catalyzed by the pandemic have led me to reevaluate many of the habits I have taken for granted throughout my working life. At the time of writing, I hold the position of General Librarian at the University of Manitoba, a major research University located in Winnipeg, Canada. In this role, I act as liaison librarian for a group of academic subjects associated with St. Paul's College, a Catholic higher education institution affiliated with the University of Manitoba and endorsed by the Canadian Province of the Society of Jesus. The University of Manitoba Libraries (UML) supports a community of approximately 30,000 students across two major campuses.

UML is included in the U15 group of Canadian Research Universities established in the 1990s to advance collaboration in the postsecondary sector. The breadth of our collections helps set UML apart from other institutions in the U15. We are fortunate to have access to a substantial selection of digitized primary resources through world-class platforms like HathiTrust, Artstor, and Gale Primary Sources. Using this technology, library users can, for example, pull up a virtual re-creation of a Renaissance painting with stunning color and accurate scale. Within seconds, they can move on to peruse an illuminated manuscript from medieval Europe, using high-resolution IIIF imagery to view pages with greater fidelity than the human eye is capable of perceiving.[1] While these digital tools have made it easier than ever to appreciate the wisdom of the past, their apparent convenience comes at a cost.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 across the globe in early 2020 pressured the higher education sector to undergo a rapid and multifaceted transformation in many of its traditional operations. At my institution, the most dramatic shift was the initiation of a cross-campus transition to remote learning that saw many daily workflows moved to video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Cisco WebEx, and Microsoft Teams. In this context I was hired by UML to provide remote library services for a variety of arts and humanities subjects including Catholic Studies and Religion. In a period spanning the better part of 2021-2022, I met with researchers from a variety of academic programs who were using UML's collection of digitized primary resources to work on course assignments and complete dissertation work. During these meetings, researchers commonly chose to connect with me via video conferencing applications on their desktop computers, laptops, and smartphones. While these conferencing tools were not created with library reference work in mind, I found them to be acceptable for most situations, particularly one-on-one conversations. Nevertheless, there was something about the process of working with primary resources in a remote environment that felt cold, lifeless, and rigidly formulaic to me. This chapter constitutes my most recent attempt to unpack the mixed feelings I hold toward digital technology. In an effort to determine the root cause for my frustrating experiences working remotely, I was inspired to investigate some pivotal events in the history of science, philosophy, and cosmology that shaped the digital media environment in which I found myself immersed.

The Life of Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Throughout the history of scholarship on the High Middle Ages, the insights reported by female mystics have been dismissed by an ecclesiastical community threatened by powerful proclamations born of direct visionary experience (Bynum 1990, 1). Despite this patriarchal discrimination, Saint Hildegard of Bingen went on to become one of the most well-known and influential women of the entire medieval period (Clark 2016, 120). While I can only render a minuscule fragment of her genius here, I hope that this chapter serves as a window through which the larger spirit of her oeuvre might be glimpsed.

Hildegard of Bingen was a multidisciplinary polymath whose legacy of work forms an interlocking matrix of poetry, philosophy, herbology, musical composition, and linguistics. While it is common for significant religious figures to be obscure during their lives, the many gifts that Hildegard possessed become even more fascinating when we see how widely they were recognized during her earthly tenure (Clark 2016, 120). Today, one of the principal biographical sources that we have on Hildegard's life is the *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis* or *Life of the Saintly Hildegard*, a hagiographic text posthumously compiled by the monks Godefridus of Disibodenberg and Theodoric of Echternach in the twelfth century. In the centuries since these monks set down their mythic account, scholars have gleaned more precise information about Hildegard's life from her own autobiographical letters (Newman 1998, 4). Contemporary medievalists now estimate that she was born somewhere between August and September 16, 1098, in present-day Germany (Embach 2021, 13). Her parents were Hildepert and Mechtild, members of the free nobility who maintained a close relationship with the powerful counts of Sponheim (Embach 2021, 14). In the first book of the *Vita Hildegardis*, the young Hildegard is introduced as an unusually mature and pious child who experienced "forms of secret visions" from an early age (Godefridus of Disibodenberg and Theodoric of Echternach 1999, 26). On November 1, 1112, at about the age of 14, she entered a monastic community at Disibodenberg in a small, female enclosure attached to a larger community of male Benedictine monks (Embach 2021, 11). There, she was educated and spiritually mentored by the noble anchorite Jutta of Sponheim, who she succeeded as magistra of this community at the age of 38 (Embach 2021, 14). Hildegard writes that after turning 42, she received divinely inspired instruction to write

down the visions she had been experiencing since childhood in a resounding "voice from Heaven" (Hart and Bishop 1990, 59). In suitably mythic fashion, she initially refused this divine call, only acquiescing to her larger spiritual fate when she came down with a severe illness, a calamity she believed to be directly correlated with her rejection (Embach 2021, 21). Over the course of a decade, Hildegard began sharing her visions publicly and set off to found her own monastery at Rupertsberg near the town of Bingen (Embach 2021, 23). It was during this period that she blossomed as a writer and teacher and began working out the subtleties of her theological vision across a series of visionary tomes.

Introducing the Scivias

The *Scivias*—the shortened title version of *Scito vias Domini* or *Know the Ways of the Lord*—is Hildegard's first major textual work. It consists of three books comprising 26 visions in which a path to spiritual salvation is laid out in the stately tenor of a prophet. Many scholars agree that during the later years of Hildegard's life, she commissioned a group of nuns to create a series of painted images to accompany her writing (Bain 2018, 143). During the twelfth century, these materials were compiled as part of a series of illuminated manuscripts alongside much of Hildegard's written correspondence and musical composition (Bain 2018, 143). This collection came to be known as the Rupertsberg Codex or *Risencodex* and remains an authoritative primary source for medieval historians today. While the 30 Years' War was raging across the Rhineland in the seventeenth century, a group of Rupertsberg nuns took the *Risencodex* with them while fleeing the conflict, eventually storing it in a nearby house Hildegard established around the year 1165 (Bain 2018, 144). Here it lay until the monastery was closed towards the beginning of the nineteenth century and the collection was transferred to the Wiesbaden State Library in Germany (Bain 2018, 144). Unfortunately, the original *Scivias* was lost during the bombing of Dresden in 1945 and is now thought destroyed. Luckily, a hand-painted facsimile was created by the nuns of Hildegard's abbey between 1927 and 1933, and black and white copies of the original were generated during the 1920s (Campbell 2021, 260).

According to Margot E. Fassler (2022), the *Scivias* remains relevant to contemporary readers because of the comprehensive way that Hildegard communicates the medieval worldview. This dynamic aesthetic and literary style was unique for its time and provides us with "otherwise unattainable knowledge" about the High Middle Ages (Fassler 2022, 1). One way to appreciate the scope of what Hildegard presents to us in the *Scivias* is by considering it as a work of cosmology. While, today, this word has come to be associated with the discipline of astrophysics, the fields of science, theology, mythology, and art had not yet been separated in Hildegard's time, and they formed "part of a grander scheme of knowing" (Fassler 2022, 12). For this reason, we would do well to adopt Fassler's broader definition of the term as "the study of the origin, evolution, and future existence of the universe" (2022, 13). Barbara Newman describes the *Scivias* as a "multimedia work" in which a nexus of verbal and visual relationships come together to "enhance the text and heighten the visionary message" (1990, 25). For each experience recounted in the *Scivias*, Hildegard begins by describing what she "saw" and proceeds to unfurl her deeper theological and doctrinal understanding of the vision based on what she "heard" (Chatterjee 2011, 136). As such, the paintings have a distinctly didactic character and draw heavily on the visual vocabularies that permeated Christian Europe in the twelfth century (Campbell 2021, 259). To grasp these vocabularies, it will be helpful to familiarize ourselves with some of the basic cosmological ideas that structured the medieval mindset.

The Cosmology of the High Middle Ages

For those who live in large metropolitan cities, it is easy to become disconnected from the cavernous depths of the night sky. With distractions like light pollution, urban infrastructure, and the ceaseless hum of industrial machinery, we tend to lose awareness of the immediate fact that we are hurtling through space on a constantly revolving organic sphere. But if we take a moment to step away from our busy routines and gaze into the stars, we can learn to experience the wonder of our cosmic predicament in a way that feels both timeless and deeply inspirational. Over the course of centuries, a vast array of human cultures have conjured the inexhaustible mysteries of the heavens through narratives, mythologies, and traditional stories. For

this reason, studying how a given culture conceives of the stars can help to map the underpinnings of their cosmological perspective.

For a person living in twelfth-century Europe, it was common to think of Earth as the stationary center of a series of eternally revolving concentric spheres. The terrestrial world was thought to consist of the four classical elements of Hellenistic philosophy: earth, water, air, and fire (Brasher and Lewis 2001, 23). Above this were spheres corresponding with the seven classical planets—The Moon, Mercury, Venus, The Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (Brasher and Lewis 2001, 23). At the farthest reaches of this vast holarchy were the "spheres of the fixed stars and the Prime Mover," marking the liminal boundary separating our observable world from the subtle realms of saints and angels (Brasher and Lewis 2001, 23). Though few of us still ascribe to this cosmological perspective, its traces are present today. For example, the names of the seven weekdays used in many languages including English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese are derived from the seven classical planets and their associated symbolic meanings (Brown 1989, 536). In the *Scivias*, Hildegard draws on this epic geocentric cosmology and depicts our Universe as a grand symbolic totality—in her words, a manifestation of "not just the things that are visible and temporal, but also the things that are invisible and eternal" (Hart and Bishop 1990, 94). A telling example of Hildegard's celestial orientation can be found in book one, vision three, in which the emanating forces of cosmogenesis are described in a section entitled "Das Weltall" or "The Universe" (1990, 91-105). In a vision passage cited below with parenthetical annotations from medievalist Peter Dronke (1985), Hildegard recounts a visionary experience where she perceived the primordial universe as a vast egg encircled by a shell of living fire:

> I saw a huge structure, rounded and shadowy, in the likeness of an egg: narrower above and below, and in the middle wide. Encircling its outer part was a lucent fire, having a kind of shadowy skin below it. In that fire was a ball of sparkling red flame (i.e. the sun), so great that the entire structure was lit up by it. Three torches were ranged in order above (i.e. Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), which with their blaze held the ball in place lest it should slip. (97-98)

While an analysis of this passage's deeper theological meaning goes beyond the scope of this chapter, we can see from Dronke's commentary how its language refers to the geocentric worldview

that was common at the time. But due to the metaphysical nature of this cosmological backdrop, it is difficult for present-day readers to understand the ideas that the work was originally created to convey. For this reason, I argue that when experiencing illuminated manuscripts like the *Scivias*, we must learn how to tune in to this broader network of meaning via a process of thinking, feeling, and intuitive understanding I call *spiritual resonance*. Material inscriptions like written text and painted imagery can work to facilitate this act of symbolic attunement. But in the same way that a broadcast of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony cannot be located in the mechanical parts of a radio receiver, the meanings invoked by the *Scivias* cannot be deduced from the markings on its pages.

Spiritual Resonance

The notion of spiritual resonance might strike those who have been educated within a modern scientific worldview as unorthodox. This result is likely because it breaks with the metaphysical doctrine of *physicalism* that has characterized scientific thought since the seventeenth century. Physicalism is the idea that all natural processes—including those of human learning and perception—can be explained by locally occurring physical causes (Kelly 2015, xii). While modern science has proven that physical causes play a crucial role in many material, chemical, and biological processes, a growing body of interdisciplinary evidence is challenging some fundamental assumptions of the physicalist perspective.[2] One example is the quantum mechanical notion of entanglement, or nonlocality, which physicists David Bohm and Basil Hiley define as "the intimate interconnection of different systems that are not in spatial contact" (1975, 93-4). While nonlocality has remained a controversial idea since it was proposed by quantum physicists in the mid-twentieth century, it has now been firmly recognized by the physics community as "a fundamental feature of the universe" (Keepin 2023, 7). In 2022, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to doctors Alain Aspect, John F. Clauser, and Anton Zeilinger for a group of experiments that empirically demonstrated the existence of entangled quantum states (The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 2022).

While the role that entanglement plays in the macroscopic universe has yet to be determined, developing what Bohm and Hiley

(1975, 93) call an "intuitive understanding of nonlocality" can help us to understand how readers attune to historical works like Hildegard's *Scivias* through spiritual resonance. Resonance—which derives from the Latin *resonatia*, meaning echo—occurs when different processes vibrate together at the same frequency (Davis 2019, 112). Musicians are likely familiar with the concept of resonance from the rehearsal room. When a vocalist belts a high C through an amplified public address system, nearby instruments tuned to the same pitch will vibrate in unison, even after the original sound has subsided. While this example illustrates the phenomenon of local resonance, the spiritual resonance I am considering is nonlocal and functions independently from space-time distance. Though this may sound strange, it is not unprecedented. An everyday example of nonlocal resonance can be found in the operation of memory. Let us imagine we are walking through the stacks of an unfamiliar theological library as part of a professional conference. As we pass through the entryway, we catch a certain musty smell that triggers a long-forgotten childhood memory of reading Robert Munsch's *Love You Forever* on our grandmother's lap. Stirred by waves of nostalgia, the recollection inspires us to enter the stacks to look for that same book to read it once again. The important thing to note here is that the two events—the present smell and the past memory—are linked by symbolic meaning rather than spatiotemporal proximity. Nevertheless, the past event retains causal efficacy in the present and can trigger us to make choices that affect the future in a measurable way. Similarly, I hypothesize that information artifacts function like embodied memories, transmitting their meaning across time and space. Aesthetic qualities like color, calligraphy, layout, texture, weight, and size modulate the intensity of these echoes of meaning. At this stage, I am not claiming to have proven this hypothesis or identified the precise process behind it. Nevertheless, I hope that the idea appeals to readers' intuition and serves as a theoretical inspiration for future research.

While working with postsecondary researchers during the pandemic, I found that the computer interfaces that academic libraries use to mediate access to digitized primary resources interfere with spiritual resonance. To understand why, we can take a closer look at the design principles that inform the structure of our current virtual work environment. Many of the undergraduate students with whom I connected over video conferencing had a difficult time navigating UML's collection of online primary resource guides. While I cannot speak for every student, I expect that a great deal of this

confusion had to do with the platforms that libraries use to share virtual materials. At UML, for example, most of our subject guides have been created using the Springshare LibGuides content management system, an industry standard for academic and public libraries worldwide. The program is designed to help libraries organize information resources by type, class, and subject and uses a grid-like layout optimized for a digital work environment based on the desktop metaphor. The desktop metaphor consists of a group of design principles that have come to define human-computer interaction since the rise of operating systems like Windows and macOS in the late 1980s (Kaptelinin and Czerwinski 2007, 1). Today, the main features of the desktop metaphor are so ubiquitous that they are almost invisible–overlapping rectangular windows, applications optimized for mouse and keyboard functionality, and a hierarchical layout that emphasizes the linear presentation of text and imagery (Kaptelinin and Czerwinski 2007). However, the user interfaces that younger students have become accustomed to from their smartphones and other touch-based devices are moving away from the emphasis on linear text and static imagery that characterizes desktop computers. Nevertheless, many web applications in and beyond the library encode and reproduce the desktop metaphor in their basic design. As a result, the spiritual resonance of primary resources like the *Scivias*– which predate the modern office environment entirely–is diluted in intensity.

For example, in a digitized edition of the *Scivias* created by the Benedictine Abbey of St. Hildegard, text and imagery that were originally presented as an integrated whole are given as separate components, optimized for modern web browsers (n.d. [a]). In "The Universe" section, Hildegard's prose is rendered in a clean Helvetica font, and the accompanying painting of the cosmic egg is compressed as a freestanding PNG image that can be interacted with using a mouse and keyboard (Benedictine Abbey of St. Hildegard n.d. [b]). From a purely quantitative standpoint, it is difficult to see how this disaggregated presentation impacts the overall meaning of the work. After all, image resolution is high enough to perceive the most striking details of the original painting, and Hildegard's phraseology is preserved with a suitable degree of accuracy. In short, when we limit ourselves to analyzing the measurable text and imagery on the page, no perceptible information has been lost.[3] But with works like the *Scivias*, the formal arrangement of visual, textual, and aesthetic material plays a significant role in the way symbolic meaning is communicated to readers. In the *Scivias*, deep

cosmic truths are invoked through awe-inspiring images that reflect a dynamic, interconnected, and highly intelligent universe. To fully appreciate the integral cosmology that the work puts forward, it is important that its various components are experienced as an aesthetic gestalt.[4] Unfortunately, when these illuminated pages are viewed within interfaces optimized for an office environment, it becomes much more difficult to attune to their symbolic power. In my opinion, the critical factor limiting desktop-based interfaces has to do with the way they prioritize *content* (namely, linear text and static imagery) over the form, texture, and scale of the original resource. Furthermore, I believe that these tendencies mirror certain metaphysical biases that were introduced into Western thought when the holistic medieval cosmology that the *Scivias* epitomizes was being replaced by the modern scientific worldview. By chronicling these broader historical movements, I believe that we can understand how our most general intellectual assumptions become part of the tools we use to communicate.

Media Ecology and the Birth of Modern Science

Throughout human history, cosmological narratives have provided a way to situate matter, life, mind, and spirit within the vast mystery of universal process. As we have already seen, the cosmological worldview that thrived during the High Middle Ages saw humanity, divinity, and the natural world as an interconnected whole. However, during the period spanning the mid-sixteenth and late-seventeenth centuries, a series of scientific discoveries and socioreligious revolutions rocked the foundations of this perspective. As philosopher Richard Tarnas describes in his classic *Passion of the Western Mind*, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the European medieval worldview had been almost entirely replaced by a modern scientific cosmology in most academic institutions. This new worldview was defined by heliocentrism, impersonal laws of nature, and an understanding of our world as a "complex mechanical system, composed of material particles" (Tarnas 1993, 270).

The interpretive lens of media ecology can be used to better understand the role that communication technology played in this cosmological transition. The field of media ecology derives from the Toronto School of Communication (TSC), pioneered by Walter Ong

and Marshall McLuhan in the mid-twentieth century (Rushkoff 2012, 10). The term was originally coined by cultural critic Neil Postman to bring together the many theoretical orientations influenced by the TSC that study how "media of communication affect human perception, feeling, understanding and value" (Postman and Weingartner 1971, 139). In its early conception, media ecology was premised on the idea that the five human senses form a *sensorium* or perceptual field (Miroshnichenko 2016, 171). In the language of McLuhan, the media we use to communicate extend and/or diminish the ratio of senses in this field by "externalizing" them in the form of technology ([1962] 2017, 299-300). For example, we can think of the telescope as an extension of the human eye which employs mirrors and lenses to modulate the way patterns of light flow into our retinas to be communicated to our optic nerves and translated into the visual imagery we experience. Douglas Rushkoff—summarizing the work of McLuhan and the media ecology tradition—argues that once a communication medium becomes dominant in a cultural milieu, it proceeds to shape the way "people, ideas, and institutions interact" (2012, 10). For example, in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan traces the emergence of several perceptual biases that were introduced into European societies by the printing press. For our purposes, the most important of these was the formation of a "fixed point of view" through the "isolation of the visual factor in experience" (McLuhan [1962] 2017, 145). McLuhan thought that print media's characteristic insistence on visual uniformity and the linear presentation of information played a key role in the formation of "Newtonian space and time and mechanics" and the mechanistic paradigm of classical physics ([1962] 2017) 306). As the scientific revolution intensified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the linear and vision-centric worldview shaped by print reached a new level of sophistication and complexity. It was in this context that the field of library science was developed as a means of organizing the vast amount of typographic material that was being generated by modern institutions. To explain how this modern mechanistic worldview is mirrored by the desktop-based interfaces we use today, I'd like to introduce the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, a pivotal yet largely underappreciated thinker of the late modern period.

Nature in Process

 Alfred North Whitehead was a British mathematician, logician, and philosopher who pioneered the field known today as process philosophy (Desmet and Irvine, 2022). As an accomplished mathematician, he was among the first intellectuals to grasp how the developments of twentieth-century science—namely, relativity and quantum mechanics—necessitated a thorough rethinking of the foundation of classical physics and the mechanistic philosophy that informed it. As a result of these scientific upheavals, he shifted his focus away from the realm of pure mathematics in the later years of his life and laid the groundwork for a relational metaphysics "rooted in creative process" that he called the philosophy of organism (Segall 2021, 42). Key to the philosophy of organism is the idea that the mechanistic interpretation of physics was based on an unexamined metaphysical error inherited from Aristotle and imported into modern science by enlightenment philosophy. Simply put, this was the idea that the natural world could be understood by reducing it to a substratum of fundamental units or substances, static things that require nothing other than themselves in order to exist (Kraus 1998, 1-2). In classical physics, this substance metaphysics was used to construct the basic conception of atoms. The atoms of modernity were conceived of as indivisible and insentient particles of matter (possessing a finite location and mass) that interacted with one another according to a fixed and impersonal set of universal laws (Kraus 1998, 12).

In contrast to this classical view, Whitehead thought that the natural world could be conceived of in a more general way—as a weave of epochal processes called *actual entities* or *actual occasions*. Each actual entity can be thought of as a finite "drop of experience" engaged in a self-creative process that Whitehead described as concrescence ([1929] 1978, 18). These interlocking patterns of concrescence unfold through a related process called prehension. Prehension can be likened to a primordial form of feeling that involves an actual entity sensing the data of its environment, selecting those aspects that are most relevant to its subjective aim, and organizing these impressions into a novel perspective on the world ([1929] 1978, 22-3). In contrast to the isolated atoms of classical physics, these actual entities are "fundamentally constituted by their various relations with other actual entities" and cannot be considered in abstraction from the environment in which they are instantiated (Scarfe 2009, 2). It is not

substances that are considered enduring in Whitehead's philosophy, but formal patterns (or *eternal objects*) and the relationships existing between them. Whitehead did not deny that the abstractions derived from substance metaphysics had a definite pragmatic value. Rather, he was more concerned with the way that modern thought had reified the abstract idea of substance as a "logical and/or linguistic category" and taken it to be a fundamental property of the natural world (Kraus 1998, 2). In *Science and the Modern World*, he aptly labeled this "accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete" the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" ([1925] 1997, 51).

Whitehead thought that by committing this fallacy, modern mechanistic cosmology had dissociated individuals from the organic depth of everyday experience. Like Hildegard of Bingen before him, Whitehead understood nature as an unbroken continuum, a living plenum in which individual parts flow into and reflect the whole (and vice versa). To be more specific, we could say that both Hildegard and Whitehead present us with cosmologies based on a fractal understanding of nature. The term *fractal* was coined by the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot in the 1970s to describe a family of shapes that demonstrate self-similar patterns across scale. The recursive quality of fractals can be likened to a musical octave, when the same series of notes repeat themselves at different frequencies. In *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* ([1977] 1983), Mandelbrot shows how a variety of natural patterns including snowflakes, coastlines, and many varieties of plant life reflect this fractal geometry.

In book 1, vision six of the *Scivias*, Hildegard describes an awe-inspiring experience where she witnessed an army of celestial entities arranged in a mandala-like pattern. This text and its accompanying image (Unknown Author, ca. 1151-1179) depict an elaborate geometry whose intricate, symmetrical features can be likened to a fractal:

> I saw in the secret places in the heights of Heaven two armies of heavenly spirits who shone with great brightness. Those in one of the armies had on their breasts wings, with forms like human forms in front of them, on which human features showed as if in clear water. Those in the second army also had wings on their breasts, which displayed forms like human forms, in which the image of the Son of Man shone as if in a mirror. (Hart and Bishop 1990, 139)

Further descriptions from this section enrich our understanding of the highly complex visual scene. For example, Hildegard speaks of

an additional rank of entities positioned towards the center of the vision that "seemed to be full of eyes and wings" (Hart and Bishop 1990, 139). To add yet another layer of numinosity to her description, she elegantly recounts how "in each eye appeared a mirror and in each mirror a human form" (Hart and Bishop 1990, 139). Recall that Whitehead described the basic constituents of our cosmos as actual entities, drops of experience that each form a unique perspective on the universe by prehending the perspectives of the other actual entities in their environment ([1929] 1978, 18). Hildegard's descriptions of mirrors within eyes gives us a poetic sense of what a process-relational cosmos would look like if viewed from a transpersonal vantage point.

Comparing the insights of Whitehead and Hildegard in this way can help us understand the limitations posed by current digital interfaces. As we learned from McLuhan, communication technologies reinforce certain perceptual patterns by modulating ratios between the five human senses. In the digitized edition of the *Scivias*, we saw how the Benedictine Abbey of St. Hildegard used plain text and freestanding PNG images to generate a reproduction of the original manuscript that emphasizes visual uniformity (n.d. [a]). Rather than reproducing Hildegard's pages as they were originally arranged, text and image are presented sequentially, like items on an assembly line. The modern mechanistic worldview–while not present in the content–is encoded in the medium itself. The neutral, uniform, and highly linear aesthetic of the desktop environment mirrors the modern tendency to represent nature as an insentient machine that can be analyzed, measured, and dissected into its isolated components.[5] By way of contrast, the illuminated version of the *Scivias* derived from the Rupertsberg Codex was created in a predominantly oral culture that understood the natural world as the unbroken creation of a vast cosmic intelligence. For this reason, content and form work together to communicate a message of universal interconnectedness, divine providence, and spiritual inspiration.

The organic worldview presented by Whitehead synthesizes elements of both the medieval and the modern perspectives. His vision of a universe in constant motion resonates with the Hildegardian notion of a living, interconnected, and deeply creative cosmos. At the same time, his careful analysis of time, space, matter, and energy is fully consistent with the empirical findings of modern science. In this way, adopting a process-relational perspective can help information professionals design interfaces that reflect the seamless fluidity

of nature without sacrificing the precision that current technologies afford us. Furthermore, as digital technologies continue to evolve in the coming decades, process-relational philosophy can provide the theological and religious studies community with a framework for imagining how our field might adapt to the virtual work environments of the future. Thomas P. Moran and Shumin Zhai predict that the next era of computing will dispense with the emphasis on desktop metaphors that characterize contemporary computer software (2007, 335). Microsoft CEO Bill Gates also expects that human-computer interaction will shift significantly in the coming decades. For example, he predicts in a recent blog post that in the next few years, "most virtual meetings will move from 2D camera image grids...to the metaverse, a 3D space with digital avatars" (2021). In order for this transition to occur in libraries, our communities would need to have access to hardware and software that breaks with the two-dimensional desktop and convincingly situates users within a moving three-dimensional space.

The Promise of Virtual Reality

As the immediate impacts of COVID-19 subside, it remains uncertain whether remote services will become a permanent fixture of librarianship as a profession. Given the limitations of the desktop-based interfaces we have been considering, I conclude by offering some hardware and software alternatives that might help our community minimize their biases. Namely, I echo Diane H. Sonnenwald and Jason McElligot's claim that virtual reality—a form of computational technology that immerses users in a simulated construction of the natural world—could be used to improve the way library users interact with rare and historic book collections (2017). They argue that VR technologies can remedy the "primary focus on visual presentations" that limit current methods of digital engagement by providing the means for "integrated visual, haptic, auditory, olfactory and cognitive access" (Sonnenwald and McElligot 2017, 804).

Recalling the organic cosmologies of Hildegard and Whitehead, VR technology does not seem like an ideal way of nurturing the holistic sensory ratios needed to appreciate rich historical materials like the *Scivias*. On the contrary, VR headsets like the HTC Vive Pro, Valve Index, and Oculus Quest appear to amplify the dissociative effects

of digital technology by submerging users in their own isolated universes. While I do not believe this technology will ever stand in as a complete replacement for analog media, I do think it has the potential to facilitate spiritual resonance if intelligently integrated into existing library services. For one, VR technologies can provide libraries and archives with a way of making interactive digitizations accessible to audiences who are unable to access original source materials. For example, Brady D. Lund and Sherri Scribner describe how archivists at Emporia State University's Special Collection and Archives used VR to provide "a global audience of classrooms and individuals" with continuous access to the materials of renowned children's author May Massee (2019, 470). The team used a software called InstaVR and a Samsung 360 camera to create a circumocular image of their physical collection complete with interactive materials that users could investigate remotely. Interestingly, they describe how the project was instigated to address geographical challenges and make the collection more accessible to communities who were not physically on site. Furthermore, they explain how VR allowed library staff to utilize the technology's multimedia capacities to make their digital collection more engaging to users: "While a static digital object in a repository is passive, the virtual reality experience allows users to see the object on the shelf just like they would in-person and then click on that object and learn more by reading or listening to an audio clip" (2019, 477).

On top of mediating remote access, I can see VR technology being used to amplify the spiritual resonance of primary resources by building upon the material created by the original authors. Fassler hints at these possibilities in a presentation given to the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in 2014. In this talk and an associated article, she describes working on a project that considered how scholars might work to "recreate the learned medieval imagination, with its many interlocking resonances" (Fassler 2017, 161). In collaboration with digital artist Christian Jara and a group of postsecondary music students, Fassler used the University of Notre Dame's Digital Visualization Theater to construct a virtual model of the medieval cosmos inspired by Hildegard of Bingen's visionary art and prose. This model, which took advantage of the theater's capacity as a planetarium, employed a sound system with 22 speakers and an immersive hemispherical display to depict the grand movements of creation that Hildegard conjures in her cosmological works (Fassler 2017, 161).[6] While VR technologies are not yet able to simulate the

feeling of being present in a physical theater, their circumocular headsets and capacities for multisensory engagement could be used to create similarly immersive experiences for geographically dispersed communities.

In addition to the curation of collections and the enhancement of primary resource materials, the sensory depth afforded by VR and other extended reality technologies could help to enrich the instructional programs offered by public and academic libraries. For example, Austin Olney describes how staff of the White Plains Public Library in New York implemented a form of augmented reality technology into a series of library classes directed at teenagers. Using a mobile application called Quiver, library users were provided with a way of rendering the pages of physical coloring books as "fully animated, three-dimensional models" (2019, 6). According to Olney, the implementation was simple to accomplish and generated an "overwhelmingly positive" response in the community (2019, 7). Similarly, Chad M. Clark, a new media librarian at the Highland Park Library, describes how his institution partnered with an external organization to provide programs on the theme of human nutrition supplemented by augmented reality technology. At the conclusion of each workshop, staff members gave participants access to an app called HoloAnatomy. Designed for the Google HoloLens, the software allowed participants to project the biological systems of the human body as interactive objects within their field of vision (2019, 22).

In a more elaborate example, Felicia A. Smith, the head of learning and outreach at Stanford University Libraries, lays out her plans to use VR to generate interactive experiences that provide library users with "the opportunity to erase physical boundaries and explore unknown worlds" (2019, 91). In a proposed instructional session on information literacy, users begin in an immersive nightclub environment and proceed to "advance to different levels by flying through wormhole effects" (Smith 2019, 93). Along the way, they encounter ambiguous news reports and learn how to distinguish "fake news" from legitimate sources of information in real time (Smith 2019, 93). While this technology is still in its infancy, these early applications give us a sense of how librarians and other information professionals can take advantage of the possibilities that the next generation of digital work environments will afford.

Conclusion

I hope that readers found this adventure through history, cosmology, and technology to be an illuminating experience. As the immediate impacts of the pandemic subside, the planetary community faces a much larger emergency: the looming threat of climatological collapse. As a result, many of us are experiencing feelings of fear, uncertainty, and alienation as a growing number of environmental processes pass critical turning points. Despite the severity of the situation, we need not resign ourselves to a state of hopelessness. As the great Catholic theologian Thomas Berry poetically wrote in *The Sacred Universe,* by coming to a "unified understanding of ourselves, of the universe, and all the forces present therein" we can still move towards repairing our relationship with the natural world (2009, 45). Though theological and religious studies libraries have a small role to play in this grand reconciliation, our unique position as community builders gives us the opportunity to plant the seeds of a more sustainable worldview in the hearts of future generations. The road ahead is plagued with uncertainty, yet the pandemic has taught us that we can meet the obstacles that beset us with creativity, collaboration, and an eye for the future.

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Notes

1 International Image Interoperability Framework or IIIF is
a set of open standards used by many of the world's leading
cultural institutions to deliver "high-quality, attributed digital
objects online at scale" (International Image Interoperability
Framework, n.d.). For example, the IIIF Image API can be used
by libraries to enable "deep zoom" features on digital images
that are compatible with a variety of web browsers, devices,
and screen types.

2 Those interested in a comprehensive overview of these find-
ings can refer to the anthologies Irreducible Mind (2007),
Beyond Physicalism (2015), and Consciousness Unbound (2021)
edited by Edward F. Kelly and colleagues.

3 In fact, the uniform nature of this desktop-based digitization
allows for certain accessibility advantages. For instance, the
HTML text can be translated into multiple languages using
browser tools, and PNG images can be saved to a personal
device for offline viewing.

4 While I am unable to reproduce pages from the original
Rupertsberg Codex in this chapter, I have linked to a YouTube
video that depicts a high-definition readthrough of a recent
facsimile in the Reference list (Ziereis Facsimiles 2020).

5 In my opinion, these aesthetic qualities stem from the hard-
ware layer of computers. The transistor relays in the central
processing units of computers are based on the rigid categories
of modern logic (Dixon, 2017). The structure of these systems
of binary switches mirrors the modern tendency to view real-
ity through a prism of static categories (true and false, positive
and negative, sentient and insentient, etc.).

6 Interested readers can view a portion of this virtual model
from 39:16 to 43:47 of the YouTube video linked in the works
cited list (Fassler, 2014). Particularly moving is a sequence
depicting the gradual assembly of Hildegard's "The Choirs of
Angels" image as a three-dimensional domed mandala (41:37
to 43:10).

Management &
Leadership

Meditations in an Emergency

Pandemic-Era Library Leadership and Management

BOBBY L. SMILEY

> *"When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions."*
>
> (Claudius, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene V)

*T*o invoke an old meteorological saw, March 2020 in Nashville indeed came in like a lion. Just after midnight on March 3rd, an EF3 tornado cut a 60-mile swath through the city and its environs, at times stretching well over a quarter mile in width and leaving in its wake flattened neighborhoods and lives taken, including in my own stomping grounds of East Nashville. Exactly ten days later, like many—if not most—institutions of higher education across the United States, Vanderbilt University reluctantly issued an edict

exiling almost all its staff of 9,000 from the campus "for at least two weeks" owing to the rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. And, of course, what none of us exiled could have expected then was that that temporary displacement would be counted less in weeks and more in months. In retrospect, the March 3rd tornado proved a portentous event, presaging greater misfortune of a more protracted, pervasive, and epidemiological variety with a staggering loss of life, as well as unanticipated and indelible changes touching all settings not hitherto imaginable.

Despite the loss and inspissated gloom throughout the first two years of the pandemic, the Vanderbilt Divinity Library maintained services and access to resources, innovated and experimented around teaching and outreach, and sustained—and even strengthened—its relationship with the Divinity School. Concurrently, our larger library system endured financial uncertainty and demands for fiscal restraint, complex and ticklish University politics, greater operational scrutiny, and challenges and changes to its leadership. What follows is not an annotated chronology of events and actions surrounding the effects of COVID-19 on the Library, nor a scholarly disquisition on how individuals and institutions reacted *in extremis*, but rather a largely anecdotal series of meditations on these circumstances and lessons learned over the past three years as interim and then eventually permanent Director of the Divinity Library, a vaguely deputized not-so-temporary administrator for our resource sharing unit, and a more-involved-than-anticipated member of our library leadership team. These remarks may reflect my station as a campus library director organizationally nested within a large research university library system, but I have tried to speak generically enough to address concerns I imagine are shared by all colleagues, whether at small standalone seminaries, liberal arts colleges, or regional universities.

Maybe because of the mercurial, near-episodic nature of the past almost three years, I am offering my reflections, *caveat lector*, in a series of vignettes and ruminations expressed as theses in the format perhaps of Luther or Marx, Nietzsche or Adorno. For organization, I have numbered the propositions/observations, and divided the remarks into three sections: the first is an opening and brief theoretical "framing" (the bad pun will soon be evident), the second corresponds to leadership, and the third regards managing. I conclude narratively with some lessons learned for future consideration. And

Personalizing the Pandemic

while I know the conclusions I reach may be critical (even strident to some) I want what follows to be understood as empathetic, stressing generosity and grace toward all, and recognizing that none of us have faced challenges like these before March 2020.

Ultimately, I am not sure if it is our still extraordinary circumstances, or maybe where I find myself professionally, but the last two years have amplified for me the importance of good leadership, thoughtful management, and political and structural awareness of the institutional context in understanding libraries overall, but especially in the time of COVID-19. The reverberations from those experiences serve as the basis for my reflections.

I. Nice Frames, Some Introductory Scene Setting

Whether workplace or everyplace-related, taking personality inventories has perhaps unfairly always struck me as an exercise in apophenia; while the questions are anything but random, the answers they elicit fall too neatly into a series of crisp profiles and expected behaviors. But like Max Weber's notion of "ideal types" (1904), the tests can be useful conceptual heuristics for revealing motivations, unpacking decision-making, or comprehending the functioning (or perhaps the dysfunction) of the organizational culture under analysis.

Enter Lee Bolman and Terrence E. Deal's "four frames" (1991), a foundational analytical approach used in Harvard's summer Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians, and introduced to me by one of our Associate University Librarians as part of a leadership training session in March 2021. These frames help explain and make intelligible why and from what posture those leaders make decisions, manage personnel, or view the role of the library from a particular frame. Those frames are:

- *Structural*: "How structural design depends on an organization's circumstance, including its goals, strategy, technology, and environment" (43-44).
- *Human Resource*: "Centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another" (113).
- *Political*: "Politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in the context of scarcity and divergent interests" (179).

- *Symbolic*: "Focuses on how myth and symbols help humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live" (236).

Unsurprisingly, there is the inevitable quiz-style inventory associated with the four frames that suss out what frame you most frequently apply; the results have a horoscope-like accuracy, which either seems spookily spot-on or eye-rollingly off-the-mark, but that is not the entire point of what Bolman and Deal are trying to telegraph.

What they are providing is a reflective exercise to introduce a conceptual matrix that encourages perspectival thinking, which they describe as "multi-frame," which is "thinking [that] is challenging and counterintuitive. To see the same organization as a machine, family, jungle, and theatre requires a capacity to think in different ways at the same time about the same thing" (Bolman and Deal 1991, 422).

And while there are other ways to reckon with organizational dynamics and approaches to workplace problem-solving, the frames have offered me a helpful analytical tool that has informed how I have read the action of those in authority, and have broadened my own approach to understanding problems and designing solutions. As I wrote the following, I kept returning to frames as a way of understanding my reflections. That my principal frames are "political" and "human resource," I believe, are manifest, and complement how I think about leadership (people and operationally oriented) and management (animated by advocacy and transparency).

II. Leadership? What Leadership?

1. "Bad leaders react. Good leaders plan. Great leaders think." (Hoffman 2019)

1.1. When I began my career as a professional librarian, I confess one of the last places I envisioned myself was in a formal leadership position, or even notionally invested in a robust idea of leadership as an essential precondition for a motivated and successful organization. Given my longstanding intellectual commitments, until I became

a professional librarian I was cynically dismissive of the idea of leadership *qua* leadership, often viewing it as an empty signifier for vacuous business-speak trotted out to dress up "bold" decisions or justify the caprice of people in charge. What I eventually discovered is that leadership is better described as a floating signifier rather than an empty one, and that its plural definitions have ultimately proven more empowering than limiting or intellectually bankrupt. Whatever "leadership" is (vision, uplift, charisma, analytical acumen, inspiration and direction, *et hoc genus omne*), it is more organizationally requisite and meaningful than any single definition can convey.

> 1.1.1. Admittedly, I was never in an organization or in a position where something so abstract or discursively gossamer appeared to matter. But now in a large organization positioned in middle management, I rapidly learned leadership matters tremendously.

> 1.1.2. If this recognition was belated, then the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has furnished a post-graduate course in the all-encompassing import of leadership, specifically leadership style in a time of crisis and its amplificatory effects on an organization at all levels.

1.2. Whether around an office water-cooler or a cocktail in a bar (or on Zoom in your pajamas), casual analysis of leadership styles invariably includes arm-chair psychoanalysis, and while potentially revealing and always satisfying (like taking a hit of something Freudian no doubt), the insights yielded help more to explain an individual leader rather than that specific leader's effect on an organization. Stepping back from the conjectured origins of one person's dispositions, I have, nonetheless, found it helpful to name what those dispositions are and how they surface to enable or exacerbate tensions, concerns, or assumptions affecting staff morale.

> 1.2.1. While trait theory has long fallen out of fashion in leadership studies and organizational psychology, in my experience aspects of a leader's personality can and often do influence morale, bespeaking how and why decisions are made.

2. Libraries, Hurt Feelings Of

> "Nothing true can be said about God from a posture of defense." (Robinson 2004, 177)

2.1. As librarians know all too well, libraries are frequently marginal to university-level decision-making and generally have less purchase or independent agency in the institutional governance and politics of higher education.

2.2. Fobazi Ettarh's idea of "'vocational awe' refers to the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique" (Ettarh 2018). In a similar vein, as my perspicacious predecessor Bill Hook wrote well over a decade ago, "while librarians see as self-evident that there are intrinsic values and goods served by libraries, we frequently incorrectly assume that those intrinsic values are shared by our institutional administrators and are surprised and even distressed when we find that this is not necessarily the case" (Hook 2009, 20). Confronted by the consequences of those asymmetries of power, the fallout from that normative framework is an internalized self-righteousness about the apodictic importance of libraries and librarians, which, while genuine and frequently justified, tends to manifest as incredulity and defensiveness shading into victimhood.

2.3. Leaders who activate or aggravate this disposition of an injured pride pin-pricked with defensiveness, I believe, damage library organizations by reaffirming an inflated sense of uniqueness and thereby distance, eroding trust between the libraries and university—creating an us vs. them mentality—and contributing to a generic feeling of disenfranchisement among staff.

2.3.2. In doing so, leaders exhibiting, or explicitly expressing those traits, whether indirectly or publicly, complicate the role of the middle manager in several ways. Managing up and motivating down furnish the most immediate challenges, but it can place that middle manager at variance with leadership when trying to work with colleagues outside the libraries.

2.3.3. And if leadership is not unjustifiably frustrated, but intransigent in their resignation, this defensiveness can also forestall

opportunities to build positive relationships with known supportive university administrators.

2.4. "[F]or the librarian who proposes realistic changes," Bill Hook argues, "and seeks input from the administration will be seen as a valuable conversation partner during times of restraint." Ultimately, this means for library leadership, he urged, "resisting the temptation to cast the library as a victim … [which] can be presented in the context of the institution-wide restraints, rather than specific 'persecution' of the library." (Hook 2009, 21).

3. Taking Administration by Strategy

3.1. Routinely concomitant with defensiveness is an impatient and anxious posture of needing to react immediately rather than approaching crisis situations or entreaties from the university intentionally and in concert with larger strategic priorities.

3.2. In an emergency, runs an old aviation adage, the first thing you should do is wind your watch. Watch winding affords distance, establishes or affirms boundaries, enjoins you to look both retrospectively or comparatively (what have you done, what are others doing), and it allows you to knit reacting to immediate requests or contingencies to your larger goals, objectives, and strategic framework—if you have one.

3.3. Indeed, not wanting to have goals and objectives or a strategic framework in place, or maintaining indifference to these as indispensable to effective leadership is, I believe, in effect, an abdication of leadership.

> 3.3.1. Whereas not aligning the strategy you do have with the mission and vision of the institution is often an exercise in futility and a recipe for frequent defeat.

3.4. It is a pop business-lit move to adduce the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz's canonical treatise *On War* when discussing leadership, but you do begin to discern the utility of his work after spending a few years in a leadership role in a large organization.

3.5. "Tactics is the theory of the use of military forces in battle," Clausewitz explains, while "strategy is the theory of the use of battles for the object of the war" (Clausewitz 1918, 86).

3.6. The martial language notwithstanding, Clausewitz's distinction between tactics and strategies illumined for me how the library's overall approach was to react tactically rather than understanding our actions as part of a larger project that required a plan patterned on strategies.

3.7. And while good tactics may afford victory discretely, Clausewitz emphasized that sound strategy enables the final victory, and ultimately brokers an enduring peace (Clausewitz 1918, 111). In our context, that counsel from Clauswitz means couching our tactics in a strategy that aligns with the university priorities for the library, thereby ensuring a more irenic relationship with a higher degree of cooperation and trust.

3.8. The onus is on the library to enact a strategy that tactically establishes and demonstrates what it understands as important, but, in the aggregate, can ladder up coherently to broader goals, the vision, and the mission. By "coherently," I mean how the library's actions or petitions fall into patterns contributing to the larger strategic narrative, and how they can *in toto* demonstrate intelligibly to those outside the library how the moves it makes or metrics used to index its success help further broader, shared considerations.

III. I am managing

4. Thank You, The Management

4.1. If tactics and strategy can be different but related enterprises, then management and leadership can possess a similarly different, but nonetheless still codependent relationship. If leadership trades in elevating the collective, then that inspiriting loftiness should cash out in management as a translation exercise into the concrete and quotidian. From the very beginning of the pandemic, I was confronted with situations that made manifest this relationship and revealed to me how the way I approach my role as Director informs my view of both.

4.2. In the welter of uncertainty that was March 2020, the initial reaction to working from home (WFH) from some in upper leadership all the way to individual line managers was unsurprising and

personally disappointing. Unsurprising insofar as higher education as an industry, outside of faculty, in the main had been highly skeptical, if not outrightly inimical, to the idea of working from home; how that skepticism and hostility played out furnished my disappointment. That disappointment manifested around managerial distrust, which was evinced by a near-paranoia about productivity and a penchant among too many for Stasi-like surveillance, typically accompanied by constant and, ultimately, time-wasting reporting out.

> 4.2.1 In a moment of headshaking, "I thought we were better than that, bro" frustration, I pounded out a manifesto, which I circulated among trusted colleagues, which in turn made it around to others Samizdat-style. What follows is that manifesto, frozen in amber and impatient for its arguments to be accepted, which, in retrospect, I confess, seems to trade a little too excitedly in treating now (or even then) basically axiomatic propositions as original insights.

5. "Theses on Not Being a/an [preferred term of opprobrium] Supervisor While WFH During a Pandemic" (March 2020)

5.1. *Things are different, but the same* (a.k.a., just because you're working remotely doesn't mean everyone is, *ipso facto*, slacking unless monitored). We already know what each of us does, and even have a good sense of what we don't do (and how well we do or don't do). And we know that productive work doesn't always look productive. These things remain true when you're working remotely. Remember these things.

5.2. *Trust but verify (But trust first/more)*. While a tweak of a putatively Russian maxim quoted *ad nauseam* by Ronald Reagan when dealing with the Soviets, it's useful to remember with its parenthetical appendage, notwithstanding this political association. If you can trust folks on site, you can trust them at home—in the main, they're professionals and adults. Verification in this context presupposes good contingency planning (GCP) and scheduled communication that is frequent but not invasive or designed to surprise or entrap presumed goldbrickers. GCP should involve a simple way of naming work to be done, and how to report out that work. Bullet points and B+'s are good enough. GCP also suggests alternative activities and expects contingencies, while acknowledging work may look exactly

the same as it does on-site but also may take longer/be more complicated to accomplish (see 6.1).

5.3. *Asynchronous presence.* With synchronous communication software like Slack or MS Teams, we now have an effective and easy way to communicate while also possessing a tool that can easily be harnessed for the worst of already-bad surveillance capitalism. When using the chat function, think of communication like texting or sending an email: one can reasonably expect a timely response, but not impatiently anticipate an immediate one. If you want an immediate response, place a call. Given the presumed weight with which calling is freighted, recall if you'd like to receive a call for the same thing (see 6.5). Also, "status" [on-screen indication of availability] should be read generously—assume positive intent.

5.4. *Keep the Sabbath Holy.* Just because someone is reachable, that does not mean they're always available or even should be. Especially, especially now, when folks are working at home, boundaries need to be respected, and reinforcing time away from work should be minded as attentively as time marked out for it. Just as WFH doesn't immediately make people lazy or conniving, it doesn't flatly equate with 24/7 availability or transform weekends into weekdays.

5.5. *Check your supervisory privilege.* I'm tempted to use the more Žižekian/Lacanian, "check your enjoyment," but I think "privilege" is probably more readily intelligible and less potentially affronting. Ask yourself about your reporting expectations for staff: are they ones that you would be content if applied to you? And even if they are, ask yourself if is this concretely furthering the work of the library, or just providing personal reassurance and fodder for external validation that you're doing your job as a manager?

6. Do Look Back

6.1. Shorn of the overheated diction or somewhat accusatory rhetorical questions, I think many of these propositions are accepted to a degree not imaginable in many quarters prior to the start of the pandemic. At that time, you can tell I was fixated on countering arguments from the administration about potential under-productivity. But had this been one year or even six months later, the stress would fall on acknowledging the psychological fallout from COVID-19 and the equal import of self-care. Who would have guessed at the

beginning that it was not unproductivity, but rather hyper-productivity and the attendant burnout that should have concerned managers most?

IV. The Future of What

If the pandemic has taught me anything as a director, it is that my disposition to think in the political frame has been amplified over the past three years in ways that have eclipsed, to an even greater degree, my capacity for reasoning through the human resources frame. What I mean is that the foregoing thoughts about leadership and management highlight insights (such as they are) stoked by the pandemic, but hardly unique to the pandemic experience. I would argue that the concerns I voiced or conclusions I have drawn about leadership style, institutional politics, or effective management have always been quiescent, almost beyond dispute. That the pandemic helped surface and accelerate those issues, I would also argue, is even more incontrovertible.

Identifying spaces and places where my perhaps exaggerated sense of the political frame subtends the structural and symbolic frames has been one of the salutary challenges as Director over the last three years. For me, those challenges have coalesced around several areas, and two key, interrelated ones have been constructing a narrative and implementing meaningful assessment.

Common to any complex organization, communication is a perennial problem for libraries, both internally and externally. Concerning external communication, while libraries might be effective in reporting out, in my experience they typically are less successful with (or often unaware of the necessity for) messaging; that is, we like to let the university know what we have been up to, but we fail to provide a narrative that connects the library's work with the university's strategic priorities. As E. M. Forster might have expressed it, we are all story, no plot (Forster 1974).

In their institutional reporting, libraries like to recount their successes, invoke indices of use, spotlight marquee acquisitions or collections, and, if lucky, extol a wealthy alum or corporate bigwig for their benefaction and munificence. What plaits these stories together is an implicit argument about the self-evident value of libraries (vocational awe, anyone?), but this argument, so manifest to us in

the profession, is much less obvious beyond the superficial level to those on the outside. Indeed, I imagine that to the skeptical administrator, the library value argument from self-evidence can often be so occluded that it may remind them of Churchill's disappointing dessert: "pray remove it—it has no theme" (Home 1976, 119). And to cost-conscious administrators, as one of my colleagues observed with impertinent perceptiveness: "the libraries aren't the dorms." We are a cost center, not a money maker, and while requisite and necessary, we can still be kept alive through trickle-down undernourishment, rather like feeding the sparrows by feeding the horses.

Effective library narratives require a robust backstory: a clear mission explicitly aligned with the university; statements of shared values accepted staff-wide; and a strategic plan that accents the library's value-add through reach and impact, active engagement, and mechanisms for continuous improvement. From there, those individual library stories can be embedded in a narrative arc that is more transparent in conveying the value the library provides and names more obviously the stakes for both the library and its governing institution.

Narratives not only help connect libraries to the university's work, but also they make meaningful assessment possible. Narratives are also a good way to militate against a mindless aggregation of statistics we use to convince university administrators of our value. And unfortunately, it is a besetting problem that goes back to the fact that we like to collect statistics, but those statistics are practically unintelligible to anybody outside the library. As the historian of science Theodore Porter explains, "quantification is a technology of distance," which furnishes "a way of making decisions without seeming to decide," and its "objectivity lends authority to officials who have very little of their own" (Porter 1995, 8). The concomitant frustration felt by librarians who trot these statistics out to university administrators, who in turn look at them and blink in bemusement, is something that can be substantially redressed by developing strategically informed, meaningful assessments.

For any assessment to be meaningful or useful, it must first be connected to an objective that issues from a goal constituting part of the vision or mission of the library. Without that strategic alignment, the library should recognize and acknowledge that, for data collected and reported, those "data themselves are not assessment" (Horowitz 2011). What often results from treating data as assessment is decision-based evidence-making; that is, data are back-narrated to

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explain decisions that ultimately were not informed by those data. A further consequence of this thinking is an overemphasis on use and output and an accompanying attachment to measurements and benchmarks, what historian Jerry Z. Muller calls "metric fixation" (2018, 3).

Metric fixation can often be a product of anxiety and is usually a proxy for demonstrating value. And "problems arise," Muller argues, "when such measures become the criteria used to reward and punish" (2018, 7). The corollary to metric fixation is what economists call Goodhart's Law; in its most frequently paraphrased version, it is the idea that when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure (Goodhart 1975). In the face of uncertain and capricious punishment or reward, find a measurement and make it higher, larger, or faster. And the work done by those superlative numbers and the putative objectivity they afford, Porter observes, often "names a set of strategies for dealing with distance and distrust" (Porter 1995, ix), especially if an organization that deploys that data feels institutional distance and distrust even more keenly.

This is not to say that measurements *in toto* are not useful or, indeed, necessary, but it is to suggest that those numbers can only make sense if they are gathered for a bigger project—work in service of a larger narrative—that enables the library to explain to its campus peers how its work is pervasive and empowering to its users. And what I believe the pandemic has, perforce, moved libraries toward is recognizing that if we are to demonstrate value (however that may be understood) we need to shift from use to users, from generic to local, from outputs to impact.

In a symbolic sense, what narratives provide is an opportunity for agency, and assessments can help substantiate that agency. If the library can craft its message, buttressed by meaningful data, then it can speak back (albeit best in the language of the institution's mission) in a way that, in the most ideal scenario, can help set agendas and afford innovation.

The idea of agency points to my closing pandemic-borne lesson: create solutions on your terms to spare others the opportunity cost of having to do it themselves. Whether it was a new service or indirect strategic planning, I discovered more opportunities than I would have anticipated in an emergency situation (what Homer Simpson once aptly described as "crisitunity") (1994) for starting or even accomplishing longstanding goals that many library directors felt would benefit and unify the libraries. Again, while not unique to the

pandemic, I ultimately feel—like the other lessons discussed in my commentary—the recent past has heightened contradictions as well as possibilities, and in so doing, it also revealed tensions that can be productive.

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Library Leadership in the Long Lockdown and Beyond

PATRICK MILAS

*T*he Gardner A. Sage Library of New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS) is located in New Brunswick, New Jersey, fifteen miles from New York City. New Brunswick falls roughly at the center of the Northeast Corridor Line that runs from Boston, MA to Washington, D.C. The Northeast Corridor is the longest and (usually) busiest rail corridor in North America. This densely populated, regional hub is where Sage librarians and patrons experienced the COVID-19 library lockdowns.

Out of caution, Sage Library was required to close to the public on Thursday, March 12, 2020, then closed entirely on Saturday, March 14, 2020. Stipulations by New Jersey government officials required no more than one member of the Library staff to be in the building at a time. Even as staff were able to return to their offices by staggering work days in the summer of 2020, the recommendations of the New Jersey Library Association and policies of the state government

for adequate ventilation in schools and libraries kept Sage closed to patrons until fall semester 2021.

Due to furlough, layoff, graduation, or eventually "the Great Resignation," only three out of eleven pre-pandemic library staff remained to reopen the Library: a Digital Services Librarian, a part-time Library Assistant, and me, the Director of the Gardner A. Sage Library and Assistant Professor of Theological Bibliography and Research at NBTS. This chapter details multiple types of change phenomena through which I led the Library community: the frightful start to the lockdown; changing routines for self-care in work-from-home/hybrid contexts; changes in topics and modes of professional communication; changes in technology used for chapel, then library instruction; changes in personnel, recruitment, and development; and changes in the Library's physical space to reopen with mandated vaccinations, masking, and social distancing. I also discuss what came after, or beyond the lockdown and phased re-openings. Ultimately, Sage Library's story is about striving to maintain library services for our local Seminary community despite restrictions in the long shadows of New York City's and Philadelphia's COVID-19 struggles.

Leading Change from the Frightful Start

Before the closure itself, the NBTS community did a lot of soul-searching. Faculty, administrators, and staff all engaged in a psychological and literal bargaining process as contingency plans were rapidly developed for many aspects of Seminary life. What I look back on as the watershed moment in academic life was the emergency faculty meeting at which faculty offered their fears, anxieties, tears, and hopes. Dean Beth Tanner emphasized what a small faculty (11) we were. If even one faculty member (e.g. the church historian or theologian) were to be taken ill for the remainder of the semester, the Seminary would be challenged to complete the spring semester successfully.

It was considered safest to engage in meetings and classes remotely, so the motion was made and vote taken to transition all faculty affairs, meetings, and classes to online platforms. At the time, I was co-teaching the research course required for all Doctor of Ministry (DMin) students, "Social Science Research Methods."

Fortunately, this class was already designed for online delivery except for an in-person intensive week, which finished its in-person work one day before the pandemic closure. But most faculty experienced substantial challenges as we set out to transform all face-to-face elements in course designs into virtual substitutes.

Deciding to teach online was a simpler task than deciding what to do with the rest of Seminary operations. Sage Library was a popular hub of learning and community on the bustling College Avenue campuses of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Rutgers University. Much more than for-credit course instruction happened here. As the Library Director, I served on the Administrative Council and reported to President Micah McCreary. In this role, I witnessed first-hand what Seminary departments were most concerned about, and how they were willing or hesitant to collaborate. On Monday, March 9, 2020, the Administrative Council met. First of all, everyone was deeply concerned about our students' welfare. Anticipated furloughs, job losses, and budget shortfalls prompted the Administrative Council to support a program for student financial assistance for basic expenses.

We were concerned about everyone's safety and well-being, but there was a broad spectrum of ideas about how far that should go. Even though the faculty were encouraged to work from home indefinitely, there were NBTS students whose personal technology needs were expected to require immediate workarounds facilitated by Seminary staff. One librarian had an immuno-compromised relative at home, and I had a one-year-old child. Amid reports from the *New York Times* and other news sources, the Administrative Council held an emergency meeting on Thursday, March 12. I made a motion to the Administrative Council to "hit the pause button and close Sage Library for one week" as troubling news about the COVID-19 coronavirus percolated in our devices and hearts. The proposal fell flat. My fellow administrators were not yet convinced that COVID-19 should be a matter of such great concern. Although I was adamant about closing the Library entirely, other Seminary departments considered it safe to be present on campus. The Dean's office expected that the registrar would need to generate transcripts on site despite safety concerns. The IT office was prepared to relocate the public access computer terminals from Sage Library to the classroom building, placing one in each classroom to facilitate what was a new expression for all of us – "social distancing." The business office was concerned about sustaining operations, some of which were paper-based

workflows. Advancement was disturbed by the pandemic news, of course, how could we maintain and build donor relationships if we could not meet with them? With a capital campaign underway and Sage Library's 150th anniversary on the horizon in 2025, I was worried, too. Although I did not believe that my colleagues in other departments should be required to risk their health to facilitate computer access for Library patrons, I was relieved that the administration would not force Library staff with health vulnerabilities to do it. I recall feeling uncomfortably stuck between following my conscience and closing the Library out of concern for everyone's safety, and my fiduciary commitment to remain shoulder-to-shoulder with Seminary operations for the success of the Seminary as a whole.

Information was pouring in; decisions were being made in rapid succession around the world. The decision to close our New York campus located at St. John's University in Queens was made for us. New York was hit harder and faster than New Jersey, and by the time I had time to call the Circulation Desk at the University Library at St. Johns on Friday, March 13, 2020, about their status or contingency plans, they had already closed indefinitely (as they indicated in a prompt, helpful email). My cell phone was abuzz with text messages and emails from Sage Library staff about the latest COVID-19 news and evidence in favor of closing the Library, each more worrisome than the last. The New Jersey Library Association recommended precautions, then closure.

Although as of March 13 Library staff were still going to work as usual, we were then up late at night texting each other, sharing anxieties for the future of our work. I found myself texting back and forth with President McCreary at midnight and emailing the Academic Dean in the wee hours. Fortunately, the weekend of March 14-15 our President made the decision to close the Seminary building for a period of weeks, while we waited to see how things progressed with COVID-19. It was encouraging that NBTS worked quickly and together to close, even before our neighbor Rutgers University closed, and before Governor Murphy called for the forced closures of private schools and libraries across New Jersey.

People take different amounts of time to process unprecedented and potentially traumatic information and events. I had initially asked for a one-week pause to address the COVID-19 crisis, but I was then granted a few weeks. Little did I know the closure of Sage Library would last over two years, until June 2022, with mandatory masking

until April 2023, making it one of the longest-lasting lockdowns and longest-lasting masking policies of Atla member libraries.

Routines of Self-Care to Reimagine Work-Life

One of the most visible and immediate impacts of the pandemic closure of Sage Library was the effect, not only on how common tasks were performed but on how life itself was lived. In the seminary context, a library director and faculty member can be very influential. Although I was in a state of disorientation like everyone else, I tried to model both vulnerability and confidence. I spoke in Library staff meetings about confusion, stress, anxiety, and even being mad at God. I shared in faculty meetings and chapel services about how much I missed receiving communion. At Administrative Council meetings, I lamented my decline in physical fitness given gym closures. I shared my fears and anxieties and asked others to share theirs if they wished. Yet, I also offered confidence, quiet assurance that more will be revealed and that the world may not end tomorrow. I asked folks how they were adapting and made commitments to new routines that helped reorient my life to the work-from-home reality, then I shared with others how I was doing emotionally and what I was doing personally, physically, and socially.

I felt antsy. I had been going to the gym with some devotion for a couple of years, and was in the best shape of my adult life. Then all of a sudden, I had nowhere to direct my energy and strength. I could actually feel the extra stress building, but I could find no reduction in the stress hormone cortisol, which was usually reduced through exercise. I worried about atrophy. In addition to the body, there was the mind to consider. My psychological condition was tied together with my family's. My partner's parents live in Manhattan, which was a COVID-19 epicenter in the early days of the pandemic in the United States. My in-laws both contracted COVID-19 during the initial spike in cases early in 2020. My father-in-law worked at Lenox Hill Hospital where there was an emergency morgue annex of freezer trucks. My mother-in-law lost her sense of smell and taste for more than a year. My partner's stress about her parents and my own stress about my aging parents who lived several states away was profound. The early days of the pandemic were gloomy and isolating.

With the COVID-19 lockdown, my train commute was interrupted, to say the least. I had enjoyed a short walk from my home to Rahway Station, a 20-minute train ride to New Brunswick Station, and a short walk through the beautiful, historic quad of Queens College that grew to become Rutgers University. I really enjoyed my commute. There were stretches of exercise, and sometimes sunshine. The ride itself had usually been a pleasure, too. The train line, New Jersey Transit's stretch of the Northeast Corridor, ran through many of the most densely populated areas of New Jersey, which itself is the most densely populated state. So there is a kaleidoscope of cultural diversity among the residents, many of whom are immigrants. Newark Liberty International Airport is one express stop away from my home station, and the cultural diversity extends to the many international visitors coming and going to the Newark airport.

Meeting and learning in unexpected ways from the folks I encountered by chance during commutes were highlights of my life in the Northeast. There was something about the wonder of who I might meet that excited me for the commute. The Rutgers librarian responsible for religious studies caught the same train, too. I benefited from both his advice and camaraderie regularly. That is until I did not. We exchanged Christmas cards, but otherwise did not engage socially for two years while our libraries maintained cautious COVID-19 protocols. The loss of my train commute definitely affected my social life. At first, the very notion of social distancing seemed impossible to enforce in our American context that privileges individualism and free will, but looking back, the degree of social distancing was devastating.

So what self-care can one engage in or encourage library staff to consider when the gyms and parks are all closed? I would try to maintain upper body strength by improvising free weights. The pandemic struck not long after our grocery's winter soup sales, so my family happened to be very well stocked with soup (also convenient in prolonging my first venture out for groceries). I would fill a utility bucket with soup cans, then do repetitions, alternating exercises. I only had one bucket (and I was not about to leave the house to find another), so I had to switch arms. It took longer than my usual work-out and it was frustrating, but when I shared this absurdity in staff and faculty meetings, everybody got a good chuckle out of it. Eventually the soup ran out and I left the house.

For cardiovascular exercise, I would jog or walk the streets of Rahway, NJ for one and a half to two hours, from 8-10 a.m. every day

when my one-year-old, Maeve, was taking her morning nap. During those walks, I would make and take calls about Library business, research support, student advising, etc. For weekly one-on-one supervisory meetings, I often walked to a nearby war memorial park that was far enough from city streets that traffic noise was less disruptive. In that location, I kicked gravel about in a fidgety sort of way, the way I might have twirled a pen in a normal office setting. Of course, only I knew about the gravel in such conversations. The pandemic shrouded so many elements of communication, from facial expressions and hand gestures to overall body language. In the war memorial park, I reflected on the lives and sacrifices of the many military and emergency personnel who lost all. As many states, including New Jersey and New York, declared states of emergency, I was especially grateful to the many types of first responders who were staffing the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we librarians were not emergency personnel in the clinical fight against COVID-19, we were leaders in the creative provision of library and information resources under potentially dangerous circumstances. Although most librarians are not uniformed personnel in any sense, I made a point of dressing for work on weekdays, wearing a coat and tie in my improvised attic study whether I would be on camera or not. At times, there was little I could think of that I did not miss about pre-pandemic life. The aspects I could control, I did. Dressing for the workday also helped me to recognize when I was not at work, and more fully embrace a new approach to work-life balance.

To ritually mark time at the end of the work week, I started making pancakes from scratch every Friday night. It became big fun for Maeve. We were not going out anywhere, and I was not coming home from anywhere. I would walk downstairs from the attic study and remove my tie, then proceed further downstairs to don my apron and make pancakes. That meant it was Friday. We had made it through another week of life in the midst of a pandemic. This tradition subsided when my daughter Esme was born in 2022, but Maeve still asks for pancakes, associating them with Fridays, and so do I. They were our weekly celebration kicking off the weekend. We eventually started video-conferencing with our neighbors during pancake Fridays, and at holidays I would invite the Library staff to join in our online Pancake Friday parties. By Christmas 2022, we were back having guests at home. What remains from the pandemic is that the Friday menu is always pancakes now!

Changes in Professional Communications: Discussing Groceries and Vaccines

Every day I would check the website of New Jersey's principal state-wide news source, the *Star-Ledger*, for which cities and counties had the least COVID cases and lowest rates of transmission. Transmission spread from airports, ports, and generally from the northeast first. Even when stay-at-home orders were in place by our governor and mayor, and trains were operating on skeleton schedules and scarce staff, long-haul truckers from around North America were passing through New Jersey's famously full-service-only filling stations. I remember vividly wondering how the virus was spreading if every-one were really hunkered down. The fact is, they were not. When I finally ventured out for a grocery run, not-so-major roads had moderate levels of traffic.[1] In April I would drive an hour south to Bordentown, NJ for groceries. But by May the virus had spread south quickly along the Northeast Corridor. In May and June, I traveled an hour west to a more rural grocery in Flemington, NJ. I kept in touch with Library staff about vaccines and their availability via text mes-saging. NBTS and New Jersey in general leaned liberal and favored vaccination. The entire Library staff wanted to be vaccinated, and we were as promptly as we could. We considered vaccination a matter of life and death. I skipped a faculty meeting when an appointment opened up for a vaccine, and encouraged colleagues to do the same. Eventually, all of the faculty were fully vaccinated and boosted.

While many of our colleagues' personal and family lives existed in varying degrees of disorientation, we managed to stay connected. Library staff met weekly by phone or Zoom. The Faculty Council who met less frequently began meeting weekly, not simply for official fac-ulty business and votes, but to multiply our joys and divide our sor-rows. It seemed scarcely a week went by without someone from our Sage Library network testing positive for COVID-19. Within weeks our Seminary family lost our immediate past-president, a newly retired professor, and an esteemed alumnus to COVID-19. I took joy in our infant Maeve as she grew during the pandemic, and celebrated the birth of our second daughter, Esme in January 2022. But by the end of 2022, my own dear mother, brother, and cousin had died.

Pioneering Zoom for Chapel, then for Library Instruction

After the administration closed the Seminary campus and Library, we set out to reinvent the Seminary experience using our key resources: people and platforms. The closure of the Seminary meant the closure of the Library and the Chapel. Before the pandemic closure, chapel services were held in person twice weekly, just before the start of in-person evening classes. How could we still be a Seminary community while closed? How could we do chapel? Where would we commune? Unfortunately, the Minister of the Chapel was simultaneously taking a new professorship elsewhere.

Sage Library staff had a tradition of gathering weekly to pray the Daily Office of Morning Prayer using the *Book of Common Prayer*, including readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. During Advent and Lent, Library staff prayed more frequently. Since most Library and Information Science graduate degree programs offer classes online and Sage Library staff consisted of recent graduates, I expected that the Library was actually best positioned to take a technological leadership role in the acute vacuum of Chapel leadership. Being a Library leader at the table with senior administrators, I was able to propose that Sage staff transition the print-based prayer services to video-conferencing, and invite the whole Seminary community to participate. Library staff were enthusiastic about this opportunity to serve our community in a new way.

Since the liturgical season of Lent was already underway, the first Lenten Morning Prayer Library staff led was on March 17. We led weekly Zoom gatherings of a dozen or more community members for two more weeks, then offered Morning Prayer every day during Holy Week. As the Library Director, I organized the services, assigning lectionary readings, canticles, and suffrages to all available Library and Archives staff. This week of chapel organizing replaced a week I had earmarked for research and writing, two activities that continue to get short-shrift to this day. However, the chapel services were well-received by those who participated. One of my thesis advisees reported that they were a great way to stay connected during the period of forced isolation.

Fortunately, a new Minister of the Chapel was recruited in the summer of 2020, and Library staff were able to return full focus to

Library work. The temporary services of Chapel leadership subsided, but the mode of delivery, use of presentation slides, and practices of turn-taking and virtual communion over Zoom that the Library staff pioneered for use during the lockdown are still the default practices for our Seminary chapel services that remain entirely online.

Prior to the pandemic, NBTS students commuted to campus for their evening seminary classes, often darting into the Library to print some course materials before class, then stopping by after class to photocopy some readings on reserve at the Circulation Desk. As a commuter school, Library traffic throughout the day was light. The peak times when a critical mass of NBTS students could be found in Sage Library was when faculty built it into their course designs. One of my great joys was when professors would invite librarians to provide in-person bibliographic instruction and bring their whole class to the Library. For my social science research methods students, I could physically show them where the bound theses were, and we could walk together to our neighbor, Alexander Library at Rutgers University, to use its Proquest Theses and Dissertations database (NBTS and Rutgers have reciprocal agreements for in-person access to databases).

The Old Testament professor would bring her class yearly. It was wonderful to teach and work with students in person, watch commentaries fly off shelves in the reference section, and see the computers full with students using Atla Religion Database's Scripture Search tool. The Pastoral Care and Counseling professor would reserve a conference room each semester for research instruction and topic vetting. During faculty retreats, I would curate displays of texts relevant to our discussions and debates. For example, to embrace post-colonialism in our curriculum, the faculty engaged the rare book exhibition "The Dutch in Two Worlds Revisited."[2] I admit that I had taken for granted all of the in-person joys of library leadership, for none of the physical elements of library life were possible once the pandemic struck.

Fortunately, Sage Library had a competent Public Services Librarian whom I mentored to take on more library instruction responsibilities. We worked in person prior to the pandemic on presentation slides for annotated bibliographies and literature reviews. So when the pandemic hit, the Public Services Librarian was able to focus on digital library services for Master's and certificate students, and I focused on research instruction for DMin students.

The Library Committee, composed entirely of teaching faculty, called for more opportunities for library instruction. The scheduled times had not been popular with students. With user-centered library practice close at heart, the Public Services Librarian scheduled them for different times of day and night and on weekends; later the Digital Services Librarian would also participate in library instruction. The sessions were better attended after the change in scheduling.

Changes in Personnel, Recruitment, and Development

The Administrative Council meeting for budget planning for fiscal year 2020-2021 occurred shortly after the lockdown. The stock market had crashed, and since NBTS benefited handsomely from the interest on its investments held in reserves and its endowment, the budget outlook was dire. Budget cuts were required of all departments. Student workers who previously staffed the in-person Circulation Desk were immediately furloughed. Unfortunately, the extent of the budget cuts also necessitated the loss of a staff position.

Sage Library was in a strong position in terms of staffing at the time. In addition to the Director, there was a full-time Public Services Librarian, a full-time Collection Services Librarian, a half-time Library Associate, a part-time Archivist, and enough student workers to staff the Library fifty-six hours per week. The Library staff was competent, specialized, collaborative, and diverse. In fact, all of my Library staff aligned with historically underrepresented identities in library services, a fact I was proud of especially as we serve a Seminary whose student body is primarily women of color. I was apprehensive that budgetary circumstances might force me to let go of a highly competent and effective person of color for no fault of their own. It was a fraught decision that I was loath to implement but I had to, and, prayerfully, I have found some peace around the matter. Leading a library is not simple or easy in the best of times. In the pandemic lockdown when the less savory realities of budget and personnel management compel us to affect the livelihood of a close colleague through a layoff, I felt it very viscerally. I was more than a little depressed for several weeks. The decision focused on the efficacy of library services in the pandemic environment, and the person I let go primarily worked on cataloging print books, which was not tenable at the time.

The position of half-time Library Associate for serials and acquisitions was retained until they graduated with an MLIS in May 2020, then that position was eliminated in favor of a newly envisioned Digital Services Librarian position. NBTS had a strong tradition of Seminary-wide participation in the recruitment of new faculty and staff, but during the pandemic, everyone was extremely busy simply trying to subsist in their specialties. There was no Human Resources Director, so recruitment was always something extra to do for whichever department needed additional staff. I was busy myself, not only leading the Library and teaching but surviving at home and trying to be a good father to a one-year-old daughter.

I advertised the new Digital Services Librarian position on Atla's online job board, and shared the call for applications with regional groups, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Library Association (SEPTLA) and the New York Area Theological Library Association (NYATLA). The position was posted only briefly and there was little qualified interest. My decision to promote a half-time Library Associate into a full-time Digital Services Librarian was less a decision than a natural progression during a stressful time. We were struggling, and I was hesitant to bring on board new staff who I had only encountered online through a video conference interview. The half-time Library Associate became the Digital Services Librarian, and the Public Services Librarian was promoted to Assistant Director in light of additional duties with acquisitions and collection management.

Once on board as a professional librarian, I directed the Digital Services Librarian to digitize unique 19th- and 20th-century documents relevant to the history of NBTS. Digitization had long been a dream for NBTS in order to preserve and make available online some of our rarest and unique historic materials (e.g. the Superintendent's Minutes; letters of Horace Underwood, whose memorial is in Sage Library; Minutes of the Society of Inquiry). This journey towards digitization began in May 2019, when I invited the Director of Digital Initiatives from Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS), Gregory Murray, to meet with Sage Library staff to talk about the table-top scribe they used to digitize Princeton's most important documents.

The PTS Library administration offered to deploy their special scanning equipment to the Sage Library as early as spring 2021 if it could be done safely considering COVID-19. Library space we made available for digitization had not contained computers or scanners before, so I liaised with our IT department to acquire a new ethernet cable line for that space. A Memorandum of Agreement was necessary,

for which NBTS and PTS general counsels were consulted. I honestly did not expect the pilot project to be able to be implemented in 2021, but due to COVID-19's impact on what work library staff could do to be helpful to patrons, Library staff made rapid progress. Some of our most precious ephemera are now preserved in perpetuity at one of the most reliable and sustainable, open-access digital archives in the world – the Internet Archive. As new scans are uploaded, they will be published and accessible via the Internet Archive at *https://archive.org/details/newbrunswickseminarylibrary*.[3]

In order to evaluate digital resources to meet the needs of online learning, I collaborated with Sage Library staff and the Library Committee of the Faculty. Together we proposed that NBTS join the Digital Theological Library (a rapidly growing community and online library of e-books and journals). The Faculty Council voted in favor and NBTS became a co-owner of this vast collection of theological resources.

Library staff began, continued, and completed many important projects in their own specialties, at their own pace. The Public Services Librarian created a virtual reference desk within the learning management system, enhanced the Library's website to support distance learning initiatives, repurposed Library spaces to support Library programming, and promoted user engagement.

Delegating leadership of reserves was a very practical decision. If I did not need to be part of the process, I should not be. So I delegated the entire process to the partnership of the new Digital Services Librarian, Assistant Director, and Public Services Librarian. Faculty and students used an online form for interlibrary loan (ILL) requests or emailed our general library email account as ILL services also cautiously resumed in solidarity with libraries in the New Jersey Library Association.

The Collection Services Librarian continued to catalog a backlog of print books of general interest and NBTS theses so they could be accessible to DMin students and other researchers via the catalog. The Archivist began two projects: identifying and organizing digitized photos of alumni who served in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) mission field to create an interactive digital display, and creating a digital archive of memos, releases, minutes, and other documents related to the Seminary's response to COVID-19. Some of the materials that we collected during the pandemic served as useful context for this chapter's development.

Sage Library had also been participating in accreditation efforts throughout the pandemic, including the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and Association of Theological Schools (ATS) self-studies on whose standing committees I served. To keep Library staff engaged with the Seminary as a whole, I appointed each to relevant task forces and committees. In anticipation of virtual reviews, the Academic Dean and I provided virtual tours of the Campus and Library; the tours were filmed, edited, and produced by Rev. Stephen Mann of NBTS. The MSCHE self-study process for the Library was thorough, and the virtual site visit was successful. The Library's participation in the self-study process for ATS was extensive, with me co-chairing the group responsible for reporting on the master's and doctoral programs, as well as Library services.

By late February 2022, the Omicron variant of the virus waned almost as quickly as it spiked, so the ATS visit was scheduled to occur in person. I came out of parental leave for a couple of days to participate in the site visit. Sometimes library leadership demands being present, visible, and ready to represent and answer any questions. Accreditation periods fall into that demanding category of work, yet leadership also requires balance. Encouraging work-life balance for my staff meant I also had to model self-care, so I returned to parental leave after the successful ATS site visit.

Sustaining the Academic Aspects of Library Leadership

In addition to administrative and managerial components, there are many academic aspects related to the role of Library Director in a graduate school of theology. My particular appointment includes faculty rank and status; I am on the tenure track and I am the lowest-ranking assistant professor. In the summer of 2020, I began to conduct research on financial management and reviewed Sage Library's financial documentation in order to write a chapter for *Administration in Theological Libraries*, the second title in a series of books on theological librarianship called the *Theological Librarian's Handbook* published by Atla. *Administration in Theological Libraries* focuses on matters relevant to new and experienced library directors. I researched this topic domain in general, and specifically at

NBTS, with an eye for highlighting standard ways to maintain fiduciary integrity.

Another academic aspect of my work includes collaborating with Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies Janice McLean-Farrell on human subjects research review and approval through a recently established Institutional Review Board (IRB), through which all thesis proposals are vetted. One of my responsibilities is reviewing every NBTS IRB application and completed thesis manuscript to prepare it for publication in Proquest's Electronic Theses and Dissertations database. Although my process for review has not changed since before the pandemic, our DMin student enrollment increased during the pandemic when we switched to completely online learning. Consequently, the number of theses to review continues to climb delightfully each year.

In the fall of 2020, I taught "Spirituality of the Twelve Steps" as part of the Science for Seminaries grant initiative. This journey began when the Ministry Studies department discussed curricular needs at its spring 2019 retreat; it was identified that a course on 12-step mutual support groups would enhance the department's offerings. The course was then selected for a teaching grant to deepen the scientific character of seminary learning at NBTS. "Spirituality of the Twelve Steps" went well and was particularly germane to the pandemic's impact on the social services work of the Church as the pandemic correlated with spikes in substance abuse and domestic violence. Later, I reworked the course and taught it again in Lent 2021 for my church (still online due to the pandemic). Fortunately, part of my faculty duties includes service to the church, which helped to justify the commitment of my time many evenings to teach the not-for-credit course for my church's adult education program. I would otherwise have been more fully present with our infant with whom I bonded immensely during the work-from-home marathon. I am now adapting and secularizing the Twelve Step course content for Library staff, some of whom are agnostic.

During the pandemic I also taught the graduate elective "Contemplation and Social Justice: Exploring Thomas Merton" (done by phone for the latter half of the class due to reports of Zoom fatigue by students and faculty alike) and co-taught the required doctoral course "Social Science Research Methods." My co-instructor and I found ourselves offering deadline extensions to the entire class repeatedly. Not all were able to complete the spring semester successfully due to COVID-19; the number of special cases for students due

to family emergencies (e.g., quarantines and hospitalizations) was extreme.

In my work with academic advisees, thesis students, and independent study students, I had to transform how I communicated with them. We transitioned from in-person meetings during office hours to Zoom meetings and impromptu phone meetings when they could find time. The DMin program takes three years at NBTS, and I have now experienced the thesis process, from start to finish entirely online since the DMin program moved to online only in 2020. In November 2021, I welcomed news of my reappointment as tenure-track Assistant Professor based on the third-year major review process; the Committee reported that I was eligible to apply for tenure at the next major review in 2024.

Networking to Survive: Leading in SEPTLA 2019-2023

As President of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Theological Library Association, the regional theological library association in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, I facilitated the collaborative efforts of our 18 member libraries by planning and leading monthly meetings of SEPTLA's Executive Committee. Summer 2020 stands out as a time of solidarity in SEPTLA. Although libraries in the metro Philadelphia area and New Jersey experienced longer closures with more stringent COVID-19 protocols than libraries in less urban areas, we still communicated actively. Our Webmaster, Myka Kennedy Stephens, championed a Google spreadsheet where a representative from each library kept its latest status up to date (e.g. closed until further notice; open to students from SEPTLA member institutions; facilitating interlibrary loan; masking required, etc.).

NBTS volunteered to host a special joint meeting of the NYATLA and SEPTLA in the spring of 2020. Invitations were sent, agendas were ready, and speakers were slated. Then COVID-19 hit. The spring meeting was canceled entirely while everyone was scrambling to pivot to virtual library services and survive. By the fall of 2020, Sage Library was ready to host the fall meeting, albeit online. It was a success, centering on COVID-19 protocols and practices. Despite distress from COVID-19, we were also attentive to the Black Lives Matter movement. The presidential statement I authored on the SEPTLA website

regarding COVID-19 and civil unrest in 2020 testified to the tension that permeated society at this time.

Presidents may serve two consecutive terms in SEPTLA. I served two, then served two more as Past President, so I continued to provide leadership as more member libraries reopened, and as Greg Murray of PTS began as President in 2021. We hosted conferences using first online, then hybrid, formats at Moravian Theological Seminary, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Cairn University.

Stuck working from home for months on end, I knew Library staff needed to stay connected to colleagues to grow and flourish, so I strongly encouraged Sage Library staff to take officer roles in SEPTLA during my presidency and beyond. Some of the positions in which Sage Library staff demonstrated leadership included the Chair of the Research Services Interest Group, Newsletter Editor (two positions), Continuing Education Committee Member (two positions), Secretary, and Treasurer.

Planning the Protracted Re-opening

Along with leaders across theological education, NBTS President McCreary was eager to develop a timeline for reopening. With so much uncertainty in international news about the spread of COVID-19, and multiple timelines for how quickly a vaccine might be rushed through research, development, and deployment, eagerness for a timetable materialized into plans for a phased reopening. Administrative Council members were asked to appoint a representative from their departments to serve on an ad-hoc Reopening Task Force. Since the Public Services Librarian's duties were most likely to be affected by reopening processes, I appointed her to serve on the Task Force. Together with five other Seminary staff, the Task Force listened to the community. I led online workshops about how to take advantage of the new resource-sharing environment that included the Digital Theological Library, the National Emergency Library (of the Internet Archive), and temporarily expanded access to JSTOR and Project Muse. Library staff met with students and faculty to discuss how best to provision library services, making use of online resources where possible, and ensuring health and safety for in-person operations.

Image 1: The library director's wife, Piper Ross Ferriter, suggested using photos of Sage Library's beauty to attract the community back to the library. We wanted the library to be used, but for people to be safe. So we adorned our statue of Hagar and Ishmael with medical face masks, and posted the photo on social media. It reminded folks of the majesty of Sage Library, and accentuated the protective spirit in which we required masking from June 2020 until April 2023.

The Academic Dean consulted students through a weekly Dean's hour when students could liaise with faculty and the registrar. The feedback from the community listening, fact-finding, and fact-facing informed the Task Force's proposal for a multi-phase approach, with guidelines for personnel in general, guidelines for building use, and Library-specific guidelines. Phase Zero's guidelines applied particularly to essential staff and covered:

- keeping building doors locked (we established a key card access-only policy)
- closing classrooms and common areas
- maintaining office door closures
- masking in common areas
- limiting in-person conversations
- frequent hand-washing
- admonition to stay home with any symptoms
- notice that areas were to be cleaned thrice weekly.

Personalizing the Pandemic

In June 2020, the Seminary moved to Phase One, which stipulated that limited faculty, non-essential staff, and "permanent renters" (e.g. the Archives of the RCA, located within Sage Library) could come into the office, allowing Library staff to resume processing requests for chapter and article scans, and processing the mountainous backlog of monograph and serials acquisitions that had amassed when the mail was not regularly checked during the lockdown. In Phase One, faculty could make an appointment to visit the Library to browse and perform research, but only one person made such an appointment.

New Jersey statewide limits on how many library staff could be present in the same space at the same time necessitated staggering work shifts. To imagine a typical week, consider the following examples. On Monday, the Library Associate for technical services cataloged the shelf of new acquisitions received from the Public Services Librarian the prior week. On Tuesday, the Library Director received a hand-written research query mailed to his home the day before, and passed it on to the Archivist to check the physical archives. The Archivist retrieved the item and scanned it for the researcher. On Wednesday, the Public Services Librarian processed rolling summer course reserves requests, leaving a list of monographs to be pulled and chapters scanned. On Thursday, the part-time Library Assistant retrieved, scanned, and disseminated the requested materials. On Friday, the Library Director would come in to check that all was well with the facility, and take Zoom calls that might have been possible from home, if there were not either a sleeping toddler or crying newborn present!

Any projects that relied on more than one member of the library staff depended on workflows that could be accomplished with staggered library staff shifts. Although the Public Services Librarian maintained regular office hours for reference initially, students and faculty often contacted her outside of those hours. Out of practicality, we forewent having reference hours at all, moving instead to do all reference by appointment, which sometimes happened on Saturdays. Then there were Sundays. As a faculty member, service to the church included participation in online Vestry (church committee) meetings, online Diocesan conventions, and online planning for an archival display and history book publication to celebrate Trinity Church of Cranford's 150th anniversary in 2022.

Phase Two began in the summer of 2020 and centered on increased cleaning frequency of the classroom building. Phase Three further expanded cleaning to Saturdays, in anticipation of reopening on

Saturdays in the fall of 2021. Phase Three also saw the mask mandate shift to requiring a mask when in the presence of others. The other changes in Phase Three regarded building use. Building use was allowable up to 50% occupancy, but social distancing and masking were required. At this time only faculty and doctoral students who were in the thesis writing process could access Sage Library by swipe card. A library assistant vetted visitors without swipe cards. Events over 20 people were prohibited. Study rooms and conference rooms were closed, and only one person could be at a research table or computer bank. Common-use items had to be wiped clean after each use. To facilitate social distancing, half of the public access computer terminals were relocated to the basement where sneeze guards were installed. An additional screen was installed at the Circulation Desk to enable circulation staff to guide a patron through the Library website from across their desk. Library staff continued to work staggered shifts following prior guidance for 50% staff capacity until July 1, 2021, when all Library staff were expected to have been fully vaccinated.

Since we were still closed to the public in Phase Two, we needed to devote staff time to weeding. NBTS has a long and loving history of being attached to its books; weeding of any kind was politically fraught, but after developing buy-in with the faculty and Board of Trustees, I charged the Public Services Librarian with weeding the reference collection. Working together with Library staff, 100 boxes of books were weeded from the folio and reference sections of the Library and shipped to the global charity Better World Books. The weeding project made available two entire rooms for technical services processing and digitization and, most importantly, increased accessibility of materials relevant to social justice that were previously in closets instead of with the rest of the circulating collection.

Planning for Phase Three was done in tandem with both strategic planning and accreditation self-studies. Library staff worked together to develop the Sage Library Strategic Plan. We developed it intentionally while in person, but socially distanced; I wanted everyone to feel included. There were times during the MSCHE regional accreditation process I was forced to rush to complete documentation about strategic plans that were entirely mine, without consulting Library staff. I lamented the top-down precedent that created, and I did not wish to be overly prescriptive in workflows or worldview. To begin the strategic planning process, the Public Services Librarian, the Digital Services Librarian, and I gathered for a staff luncheon

Personalizing the Pandemic

retreat at a riverside park in view of Sage Library. We began with some levity: a walk around the park's small zoo. The discussion centered on mission and vision statements that were developed and included in the Sage Library Strategic Plan (SLSP) to be discussed at the next Library Committee meeting.

The Library Committee was not the most active of faculty committees during the pandemic but, when I needed them, they supported my leadership and shared valuable faculty perspectives. One of our accomplishments was defining the Committee and its scope in the Faculty Manual. Members served as helpful sounding boards for the ideas the Library staff and I brainstormed about the kinds of innovations, negotiations, and concessions the pandemic necessitated. In May 2021, the Library Committee was still debating questions such as, "What if someone made it into the building without wearing a mask? What will library staff do? Should there be any disclaimer posted such as: 'This historic building does not have ventilation. By entering you acknowledge that you accept any risk to your health'?" Whether and how NBTS would address vaccination status among the community was yet to be determined at that time.

Beyond Reopening: Falling into the First New Normal

By the fall of 2021, the Library Staff, Library Committee of the Faculty, Faculty Council, Administrative Council, and Board of Trustees approved plans and protocols for reopening to our student population. I was excited for a fall semester in Phase Three because it would be the first semester for all NBTS students to be welcome back in Sage Library. However, the expectant hope was short-lived. The Public Services Librarian who had worked with acumen to pivot reference services into the digital environment decided to leave Sage Library for a new position where she could continue to work remotely indefinitely. I had read about the "Great Resignation," but had not assumed it would hit Sage Library like an epidemic, or pandemic. But it did. Our Public Services Librarian resigned.

To prepare to reopen the building and expand services to in-person users, I led the effort to recruit new Library staff. There was an excellent, fastidious librarian at the Burke Library (part of Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University) who was ready for a new role. I hired her and she effectively replaced the Public Services

Librarian with a new pandemic-savvy title of Access Services and Reference Librarian. The title shift reflected the uncertainty about whether or not we could safely provide services to the public as well as discretion about whether it would be prudent to do so with finite Seminary resources. This librarian shared a variety of useful strategies and practices gleaned from her pandemic tenure. Such accomplishments included adjusting library assistants' shifts to shorter periods which increased attendance and facilitated substitutions, migrating content and developing new research tutorials, digitizing the treasury of SEPTLA, enhancing how-to documentation for routine library tasks, and extensively researching OpenAthens as a solution to our users' needs for multiple passwords for various library databases.

More than once during the pandemic, I personally identified with the character of Sisyphus who, according to Greek mythology, was doomed for eternity to roll a giant boulder up a hill, only for it to roll back down each time it nearly reached the top. Almost as soon as the new Access Services and Reference Librarian was in place, the Digital Services Librarian resigned, also for a position where she could continue to work from home indefinitely. Due to budget constraints, I had to combine the one-third Seminary Archivist position with the full-time Technical Services Librarian position. I was concerned about the resulting workload of the combined position, but I structured the new role as necessary. Ultimately, the searches were successful. I welcomed two new professional librarians that fall: an Access Services & Reference Librarian and a Technical Services Librarian & Archivist.

Beyond Reopening: Closed Again!

Unfortunately, Sage Library was again temporarily closed in January 2022 in light of COVID-19 concerns related to the Omicron variant's transmissibility and prevalence. We reverted to Phase One for the month due to the Omicron variant, which had only recently emerged in December 2021. My wife was due to give birth to our second daughter on December 28, and I had organized parental leave to start upon delivery. But the baby did not come until January 1. So I was texting back and forth with library staff on New Year's Eve and emailing our IT director from the delivery room to post notices that Sage Library

would need to close due to Omicron. In hindsight, I should have had a more concrete start date for the planned leave. It was unnecessarily chaotic to continue to manage the library through a childbirth during a COVID-19 spike. Fortunately, my experience gained during the prior pandemic closure, along with the support of new and experienced staff, made the rapid transition back to entirely online library services effective for our campus community and for the alumni, whose in-person services had also resumed.

Beyond Reopening: Springing into the Second New Normal

Technical Services Librarian & Archivist Christina Geuther had brought to Sage Library the much-needed technical services insight she gained at Mundelein Seminary and Kansas State University. Geuther's experience with archives and digitization from Boston University School of Theology Library was also exciting expertise to have at Sage Library. She was away for a few months in 2022, but, fortunately, I was able to afford a temporary library employee in the meantime. As she was returning to work at Sage, the Access Services and Reference Librarian left for a new position in December 2022. Geuther then worked with a Library Technical Assistant to prepare the spring 2023 reserves. Our attention also turned to the recruitment of a replacement for the Access Services and Reference Librarian. A national search was conducted, candidates were identified, and we were in the process of second-round interviews when budget pressures led the President to institute a Seminary-wide hiring freeze until July 2023. Some silver lining in a short-staffed year was that the RCA recruited a new full-time archivist, Elizabeth Pallitto, who reopened the RCA Archives in February 2023. Having all lived through a pandemic that closed many archives entirely, Geuther, Pallitto, and I now collaborate to imagine enhancing archival access so that, pandemic or not, our cultural heritage is not only well preserved but broadly accessible for researchers and posterity.

It was a struggle to establish digital library services when the pandemic struck. But it was a greater struggle to resume library services in person without losing any of the energy and momentum of digital library services. These struggles were not entirely unique, and

I recall hearing many similar accounts from libraries that reopened sooner than we did. I learned about these trends first in SEPTLA's Executive Meetings, then in Atla's Directors' Meetings series, and finally saw hybrid strategies flourish while in-person myself, first at Lancaster Theological Seminary's hybrid SEPTLA meeting, and lastly at the hybrid Atla Annual in Baltimore in 2022.

Despite budget and personnel setbacks, I came out of the spring 2023 semester encouraged. Between our reopening to the public in June 2022 and summer 2023, our in-person Library traffic has increased tenfold. Literally hundreds of Rutgers undergraduates fill Sage Library for its beautiful, quiet study space, and strong wi-fi. Our circulation of print books has tripled and full-text downloads from Library databases doubled. Patrons are using Sage Library extensively, as it was intended as a purpose-built Library, and as a community hub, in-person and virtually.

Finally, one of the most rewarding experiences occurred in May 2023. We celebrated the graduation of the first student to complete the DMin degree program entirely online from the Caribbean island of Tobago. NBTS is succeeding in virtual learning and Sage Library is championing its relevant resources. The long lockdown was distressing and arduous, but it is over. It is over. To embrace a jubilee era, NBTS recently hosted its first biennial benefit gala. And if the outpouring of support and accolades from the Board of Trustees, faculty, alumni, church leaders, and current students is any indication, the Sage Library community has much to look forward to at our 150th anniversary celebration in 2025. Meanwhile, the journey continues to faithfully optimize services amid persistent change.

Notes

1   On Thanksgiving in 2020, I drove straight down Madison
     Avenue in a matter of minutes, hitting almost every green
     light; the City still looked quite the ghost town with its empty
     streets, shops, and restaurants.

2   Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands opened the original rare
     book exhibition "The Dutch in Two Worlds," held at Sage
     Library to celebrate 200 years of peaceful diplomatic relations
     between the Netherlands and the United States.

3   As part of our agreement with Princeton, the NBTS materi-
     als will also be featured in the digital repository Theological
     Commons.

Contributors

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Ian Burke, PhD, is the Training Center Coordinator for Cheshire Medical Center in Keene, NH, a role that relates to his interests in education, knowledge management, and public health. Prior to taking this position, he worked as a research consultant specializing in survey development and formative evaluation for libraries and community organizations. He worked with Megan Welsh and James Estes in 2020 and 2021 to conduct research on individual and institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic within the theological and religious studies library community.

Benjamin Dueck, MI, is the liaison librarian for Religion, English, Catholic Studies, and Peace & Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. Their role includes collection management, teaching information literacy, and providing reference services for faculty, students,

and staff. As researcher, they apply process philosophy across the library and information sciences, and they are passionate about helping their community to think critically and reach their full creative potential.

Evelyn Frangakis is the Managing Director of Princeton Theological Seminary's Wright Library. She has held volunteer leadership positions in the American Library Association and the Society of American Archivists and other organizations in service to library and archival users. She was an Association of Research Libraries Leadership Fellow and holds degrees from Franklin and Marshall College, Rutgers University, and Columbia University, where she was an International Thomson Scholar.

Jenifer Gundry is the Director for Collection Services and Assessment at Princeton Theological Seminary's Wright Library. A book historian and academic librarian, she holds a PhD in History of the Book and master's degrees in English, history, theology, and library science.

Kayla Harris is the director of the Marian Library and associate professor at the University of Dayton. She earned an MLIS degree from the University of South Carolina, is a Certified Archivist, and holds a Digital Archives Specialist certification from the Society of American Archivists. Harris has written on topics relevant to religious librarians including Marian Shrines and how to properly discard unwanted religious donations. Her research interests include web archiving and approaches to teaching with primary source materials.

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IN LATE 2019, a new coronavirus emerged and began to spread globally, causing a once in a lifetime pandemic. *Personalizing the Pandemic* offers a snapshot of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the professional and personal lives of theological and religious studies librarians, especially as they balanced meeting patron needs and institutional expectations while caring for themselves and their communities. It seeks to personalize the disruptive, chaotic, and tragic event we lived through while offering a record of this professional community's experience for generations of librarians to come.

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