

A Word from the Editor

Could we have ever forecasted something like COVID-19 taking place? The changes and the challenges it has brought about and continues to bring about are immense. As I write this editorial, Corban University (the University for which I work) is in the midst of getting prepared for a semester of social distancing and contact tracing (two phrases which were unknown twelve months ago), not to mention the other challenges brought about due to COVID-19, such as lay-offs, terminations, and other dynamics impacting our work. As editor-in-chief of *Theological Librarianship*, my empathy and prayers go out to you.

As librarians, how can we respond to COVID-19? The editorial team discussed the implementation of this forum on distance learning before we were fully aware of the challenges that would come about due to COVID-19. Like some of you, towards the latter part of the spring semester of 2020, I had to learn how to flip a class from face to face to online in a matter of weeks. Alongside the classroom flipping, we all had to flip library services to service the new norm of distance learning. There were others of you who already had strong distance learning dynamics in your library and, subsequently, the changes were like flipping a switch. We need to learn from you.

While many theological traditions are represented in Atla, some of the traditions represented believe in some higher power. Subsequently, many of us look for purpose in events like COVID-19—purpose that goes beyond simply finding a cure to COVID-19 and getting back to the norm. What are we supposed to be learning through this “new normal” that may have been difficult to learn in other contexts? How can we manifest the mission of our respective colleges, universities, and seminaries with these changes? How can libraries change to meet the needs of both students and faculty in this new context?

The forum in this issue intends to let libraries share how they have served their distance learning community. When discussing this topic as a forum, little did we know that distance learning would become a key dynamic of higher education in the spring, summer, and fall of 2020 (and beyond). As many of us adjust to the “new normal,” we cannot help but strive to strengthen our library services through these changes. As the editorial team had the privilege of reviewing all of the contributions, we learned much about how, in the midst of challenges like COVID-19, we can learn to better serve our communities. We trust that you also will learn from this forum not just ideas on how we can serve our patrons and our institutions better, but how we can learn through incidences like COVID-19 and sharpen our skills as librarians, enabling others to see the critical role librarians play in the educational adventures of students and faculty.

Soli Deo gloria

Garrett B. Trott