

## A Letter of Thanks from SEPTLA Scholarship Recipient

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I am writing this memo as a summary of my experience at the [American Theological Library Association](#) (ATLA) Annual Conference earlier this summer in Atlanta, Georgia. I first must begin my reflection by expressing my tremendous gratitude to SEPTLA and particularly the members of the Executive Committee who awarded me with this scholarship as a first-time attendee to ATLA. I did not imagine earlier this year that I would be able to attend the annual conference. At the last SEPTLA meeting I spoke with several members of the Executive Committee and was encouraged to consider attending the ATLA meeting. Again, I wish to express my profound gratitude for providing me with the scholarship that enabled me to attend. Without your assistance, I am certain that I would not have been able to attend my first ATLA conference.

The opening address of the conference provided an interesting and useful framework for the sessions that followed. Rev. Dr. Christian Scharen of Auburn Theological Seminary offered the opening address entitled “Innovation in Theological Education.” He explained how older models of theological education/formation are being transformed by new technological innovation. Given one’s faith tradition, there are certainly limits to what innovation one may push for in theological education and formation. At Orthodox seminaries, for example, “innovation” is often placed in stark opposition to Holy Tradition. However, Scharen’s opening address provided an entry-point for reflection throughout the conference that kept me returning to the title of the ATLA conference: “The Human Touch in the Digital Age.” It is undeniable that, just like the world around us, theological education and theological librarianship is in a period of transformation. How can we remain faithful stewards to theological education/formation and theological librarianship in such a dynamic environment? This was the central question I considered as I attended a variety of sessions on different areas of librarianship such as digitization (i.e. Theological Commons of PTS), archival studies, information literacy, and digital curation. Several sessions throughout those days were immensely helpful in my own professional development in two major areas—archival studies (both in terms of the preservation of a library collection and the development of institutional memory) and practical advice in the formation of a research methods/information literacy curriculum. In both areas, I found these sessions offered practical ideas which I hope to be a major area of focus at St. Tikhon’s Seminary Library.

As a way of concluding this reflection on my experience at ATLA in Atlanta, I would like to share two experiences. First, St. Tikhon’s Seminary Library recently joined the [Theological Libraries E-book Lending Program](#) (TLELP). TLELP is a consortium of independent libraries that purchase religious and theological e-books directly from publishers and share them with other libraries participating in the project. A group of participants gathered on the first day of the conference for a working lunch to discuss progress, pitfalls, etc. I learned much from this hour-long lunch and expect that St. Tikhon’s Seminary will contribute titles from St. Tikhon’s Monastery Press shortly. Secondly, a most unexpected event occurred on the final evening of the conference. I was invited by fellow Orthodox librarians from several member schools to join them in fellowship where we were introduced to one another and shared our own life journey to Orthodoxy.

Again, I wish to convey my sincere gratitude for the generous scholarship to attend my first ATLA conference in Atlanta in 2017. It was a rich and joyful experience and I look forward to attending many more in the future.

With gratitude in Christ,

Michael Skor

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