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Letter from the Editor

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Letter from the Editor



**Garrett Trott, *TCL* Editor-in-Chief
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The mission of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) is “to strengthen libraries through professional development of evangelical librarians, scholarship, and spiritual encouragement for service in higher education.” ACL accomplishes its mission through several facets: conferences, publications, mentoring, not to mention the numerous volunteer service hours of its members.

One way through which scholarship, an aspect of ACL’s mission, can be manifested is through *TCL*. For those who have been with ACL for some time, you may recall that *TCL* had a stint of peer-review. *TCL* is transitioning again to an academic journal with a peer-review component. Many are familiar with an either/or ideology when it comes to publication, which is understandable. This is one area (of many) where *TCL* will be distinct (although not unique): we will be a both/and journal, accepting content that will go through a peer-review venue and content that will not. Some of the content which ACL members find helpful does not need to be peer-reviewed. However, there is other content which we publish in *TCL*, which could be strengthened by a peer-review cycle, reviewed by colleagues, peers, other members of ACL. Our intention of doing this is to assist in the development of scholarship within the association.

Scholarship is one component through which ACL’s mission is brought to fruition. Scholarship in any context should be seen in light of the core values and/or vision of the association or institution which advocates for it. In the context of ACL, what should scholarship look like? Ernest Boyer, a key scholar who assisted in defining what we now call “scholarship” stated: “Scholarship is not as esoteric appendage; it is at the heart of what the profession is all about...” and “to weaken [a librarian’s] commitment for scholarship...is to undermine the undergraduate experience, regardless of the academic setting” (Boyer, 1990, p. 1).

Boyer (1990) argued that when we think of the concept of “scholarly” in the 21st century, we often think of having academic rank in a college or university and being engaged in research and publication (p. 15). He continues this idea, however, by suggesting that we must remind ourselves how recently the word “research” actually entered the vocabulary of higher education (Boyer, 1990, p. 15). Scholarship in earlier times referred to a variety of creative works carried on in differing contexts, and its integrity was measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn (Boyer, 1990, p. 15).

Under this framework, Boyer's work suggests that the work of librarians should have four separate, yet overlapping domains: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990, p.16). Boyer defined each of these at some length.

The scholarship of discovery comes closest to what academics mean when they think of research. Research, in many distinct facets, is central to the work of higher education. This essay, which inquiries into the meaning of scholarship, is rooted in the conviction that the discipline of research, investigative efforts within the academic realm, should be strengthened, not diminished. Scholarship of discovery, at its best, contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of an institution of higher education (Boyer, 1990, p. 17). With no intention to demean this domain, one must recall that the scholarship of discovery, often manifested through publication, is only one of the four domains which Boyer describes.

At the 2016 ACL conference, Craighton Hippenhammer and I summarized some findings of a survey which gauged the atmosphere for scholarship in CCCU schools. This presentation was followed up by our article published in issue 60:2 of *The Christian Librarian (TCL)*. Both the presentation and the article were manifestations of Boyer's scholarship of discovery.

The scholarship of integration is the manifestation of serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, and bring new light to original research. In this process, the scholarship of integration interprets, fitting one's own research, or the research of others, into larger intellectual patterns (Boyer, 1990, pp. 18-19).

The scholarship of discovery asks, "what is to be known, what is yet to be found?" Those engaged in integration ask, "what do these findings mean?" (Boyer, 1990, p. 19) Nathan Rinne's article, "Is Authority Always Constructed and Contextual: A Classical Challenge to the *Framework for Information Literacy*," published in issue 59:2 of *TCL*, is an excellent example of the scholarship of integration. The scholarship of integration and the scholarship of discovery reflect the investigative and synthesizing traditions of academic life (Boyer, 1990, p. 21).

Can Boyer's four concepts of scholarship only be applied to writing and presenting in professional contexts? While these are scenarios where many are familiar with the manifestation of scholarship, I'd like to suggest that Boyer's ideology does not stop here. Boyer's scholarship of application is a perfect illustration of this.

The scholarship of application is self-descriptive. Boyer's idea behind this aspect of scholarship was activity that aids society or professions in addressing problems. This is a context where a scholar would use her/his expertise in an effort to aid society

and/or the profession. He notes that not every place a scholar volunteers or spends her/his time is necessarily related to scholarship (Boyer, 1990, p. 23). However, there are several that are. One example that comes to mind is the ACL Board of Directors and anyone serving on any team in the association. There are those who may be involved with other regional and/or national professional associations as well. As long as those utilize a librarian's area of expertise to aid society and/or the profession, they are scholarship.

Boyer's fourth element of scholarship is the scholarship of teaching and learning. This involves the development of teaching models, practices, and approaches for achieving optimal learning (Boyer, 1990, p. 25).

When looking at these four domains, it is critical that we acknowledge that most librarian responsibilities within higher education involve at least some aspect of all four of them to some degree or another: discovery, integration, service, and teaching. Subsequently, I do not think the question has to do with which domain is being practiced, but more so a recognition that while all four domains will likely be practiced, individuals tend to shine in one or two of them. With that in mind, librarians need to ask themselves: which domain of scholarship empowers them to make a difference in the world for Jesus Christ?

The pursuit of scholarship should be liberating. If one enjoys the context of the classroom and finds that as a perfect venue to express their passions, then they likely are pursuing scholarship through Boyer's fourth domain: teaching and learning. Does this mean that they never pursue research for their course (i.e. scholarship of discovery or scholarship of integration)? This is likely not the case. However, it may mean that pursuit of an article through a peer-reviewed journal in their discipline may not be one of the first venues considered to express their scholarship.

In order to apply Boyer's concept of scholarship within ACL, I would like to argue that we must look at Boyer's four domains of scholarship through a distinct lens. The lens comes back to the mission, vision, and core values of ACL. How can Boyer's four domains of scholarship be utilized to develop, strengthen, build, promote, and advance the process of strengthening librarians? How can Boyer's four domains be used to integrate faith and academic librarianship, emphasizing ministry and service in the association? How can Boyer's four domains be utilized to develop an influential, vibrant, and growing community within ACL?

One of the distinctions of ACL is that we strive to integrate Christ into all aspects of librarianship, and subsequently, all four of Boyer's domains of scholarship. As Boyer's four domains state, scholarship is connected to knowledge. Knowledge from a Christian perspective has many facets, but the purpose of knowledge when looked at through this lens stands out: to make God known.

While faith integration is a distinction, it is also a challenge. This work requires both a component of spiritual maturity, and an ever deepening understanding of our profession (Jacobsen, 2004, p. 19). While the challenge is present, I would like to argue that it also widely opens the doors when it comes to how ACL defines scholarship. Why? The development of scholarship for a Christian librarian is both the development of librarianship and their development as a follower of Christ.

As noted earlier, Boyer (1990) stated that scholarship in earlier times referred to a variety of creative works carried on in a variety of places, and its integrity was measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn (p. 15). I would like to argue that the idea of being a Christian librarian, Boyer's identity of what scholarship looked like in earlier times, and Boyer's four domains of scholarship brings together multiple manifestations of scholarship.

Boyer (1990) stated:

The richness of [a librarian's] talent should be celebrated, not restricted. Only as the distinctiveness of each [librarian] is affirmed will the potential of scholarship be fully realized. Surely, American higher education is imaginative and creative enough to support and reward not only those scholars uniquely gifted in research but also those who excel in the integration and application of knowledge, as well as those especially adept in the scholarship of teaching. Such a mosaic of talent, if acknowledged, would bring renewed vitality to higher learning and the nation (p. 27).

Simply put, I would like to argue that scholarship for ACL is any act through which librarians are making God known, subsequently aligning with the mission of ACL and one's responsibilities to their family, their friends and the institution for which they work.

Such a broad definition of scholarship may bring trouble. Some may abuse it. However, if we go back to what Boyer states was used to measure the integrity of scholarship, it may assist. Boyer stated that the integrity of scholarship was measured by the ability to think, communicate, and learn. While there are several ways this can be measured, if an individual is improving in their ability to think, communicate, and learn, can one not assume they are developing as a scholar?

If you are like me, you see a bit of incongruity here. How can I have defined scholarship, giving it the amount of ambiguity I did and in the same editorial be talking about *TCL*'s peer-reviewed articles, only one of several manifestations of scholarship?

I have often enjoyed writing. I find that I can express myself through writing in ways that I find challenging in other contexts. I also enjoy research. Subsequently, one would think that writing content like articles is a natural manifestation of scholarship for me, and it is. I utilize Boyer's domains of discovery and integration quite often.

I was provided an opportunity to adjunct a face-to-face undergraduate course this spring. Usually I would have turned it down. I already have a packed spring schedule, but more importantly, Boyer's scholarship of teaching is not my area of expertise, nor do I consider myself to be spiritually gifted in this area. However, through a number of events that have taken place through the last year, I have also been challenged to not just develop areas in my life that are already strong, but to improve areas that need growth. As I noted earlier, we all utilize all four aspects of Boyer's domains, however some simply come more naturally than others. Subsequently, I look forward to this opportunity to develop my scholarship of teaching and learning.

With that in mind, I would encourage ACL members to develop in all ranges of scholarship, specifically scholarship that aligns with the mission of ACL: "to strengthen libraries through professional development of evangelical librarians, scholarship, and spiritual encouragement for service in higher education." In so doing, not only are we strengthening our ability to serve our colleagues, our students, and our communities as librarians, but God is glorified.



Soli Deo gloria

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