

Theological publishing guide—a new resource for ATS member schools

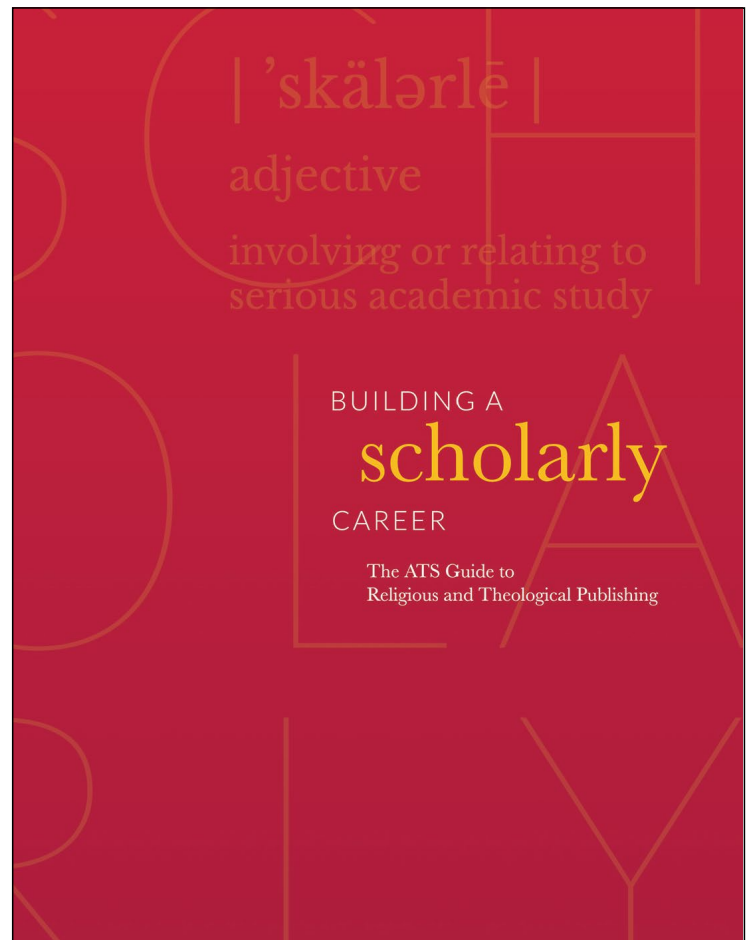
BY LISA KERN

WITH DEBORAH H. C. GIN

The ATS Guide to Religious and Theological Publishing was published and distributed this month to all ATS member schools. Written by Julia Kostova (executive editor, Research Division, Wiley Publishing) and Patrick H. Alexander (director, Penn State University Press), the guide presents a first-of-its-kind taxonomy of publishers in religious and theological studies, helping scholars to strategically assess their publishing options for a successful scholarly career. Deborah H. C. Gin, director of research and faculty development at ATS, worked with Kostova and Alexander on the idea and the production of the book. She recently answered a few questions regarding the publication and theological publishing.

Q: How did the idea for this project first come about?

The authors have become “regulars” for our work with faculty. Their preconference workshops are very well received and webinars, well-attended. In one of the preconferences, they introduced the map, and you could sense the relief from participants. It was like struggling in the back of the room—not being able to see anything on the board—then suddenly putting on your glasses. The authors gave participants access to information all in one diagram—who some of the key publishers are and how



the world of publishing categorizes them. In one sitting, attendees gained essential cultural capital. When I shared the map with other colleagues, they wanted a copy of it . . . and these were people who've been in theological education for a long time. I know there are a handful of scholars who understand the landscape of publishing very well, but most everyone else doesn't. Yet, they're assumed to know and, as experts, they can't let on that they don't know. From this, I knew we had to get the resource into the hands of all our faculty.

Q: Tell me more about the map—why is it so beneficial?

It lists nearly 100 well-known and well-established examples of publishing houses and places these presses in

categories of publishing. This is important for faculty figuring out where to submit ideas or manuscripts. Knowing where to submit makes the process more efficient and more likely to have a successful outcome. It also helps faculty to be more strategic about what will “count” in their professional advancement journeys and understand how a decision to publish with a certain publisher may stay with them into the future—for good or bad. While the map does not include all publishing houses, it lists important examples.

Q: *What is the hardest obstacle faculty face when starting the publishing process and how will this guide help?*

Faculty face many challenges to getting published. There are internal obstacles (e.g., fatigue, lack of discipline, “imposter syndrome,” etc.) and external obstacles (e.g., competing responsibilities—including many that are important but don’t “count” in professional advancement portfolios—lack of time, lack of support, etc.). But one obstacle that shouldn’t be an obstacle is access to information. This is why ATS aims to provide publishing resources to all faculty. The guide’s map lists and categorizes publishers, and the guide’s chapters outline the process of getting published.

Q: *Is this a guide mainly for faculty who have never published or can others who are accomplished scholars find it useful too?*

While the guide emerged from ATS work with new faculty, I believe it’s never too late to receive helpful information like this. I can imagine how the resource will help midcareer faculty find venues for publishing different kinds of books. I can also see how such a resource would be helpful for those teaching future scholars of religion or theology.

Q: *Is this guide geared toward faculty or can other writers benefit from it?*

It is geared toward anyone who wants to publish in academic religious/theological spheres.

Q: *What other topics are included in the book?*

The book encourages approaching your publishing agenda strategically, looking at the types of publishing opportunities available, getting to know the publishers (with a middle chapter that provides a paragraph description of many of the well-known academic publishers), and approaching the right publishers. As with any disciplinary area, religious and theological publishing has a set of well-established publishers. In that sense, religious and theological publishing is not unique. However, the presses you’ll find in this circle will be different from those you’d find in other circles, so it’s important to know who the publishers are. Of course, there are advocates—myself included—who will want to expand the “canon” of academic publishers but, at the same time, it is vital that everyone has access to information about what the academic publishing world currently considers “established.”

Q: *Other helpful thoughts?*

In past years, the model for resourcing faculty in their publishing journeys included competitive grants and fellowships. This has been an important way to bolster both the fields of study and the professional trajectories of grant recipients. Scholars who have received this support have overwhelmingly attested to the value of and the opportunities afforded to them by the financial resource.

In this season of ATS work with faculty, our aim is to provide resources to a wider range of scholars. We began small, offering webinars on various topics—including

publishing—then we negotiated a corporate license for Magna Publications' 20-Minute Mentor Commons—a video library of teaching and institutional tips—that is free to ATS faculty, and now we are providing this resource on publishing. Earlier this month, a package of

four books was sent to the dean at each ATS school with the hope that one copy would be made available in the school library and that the other copies could circulate among the faculty and staff.



Lisa Kern is Manager of Member Engagement and Deborah H. C. Gin is Director of Research and Faculty Development, both at The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

