

To: Library Patrons  
From: Myka Kennedy Stephens, Seminary Librarian  
Re: Name of the Library  
Date: October 22, 2020



Bestowing a name upon something is a right and privilege not to be taken lightly nor for granted. In May 1966, as construction was well underway, the Lancaster Theological Seminary Corporation voted to dedicate its new library building to Dr. Philip Schaff, former professor from 1844 to 1865 and one of the library's strongest supporters in its history. The recommendation came from the faculty. When the building opened in October 1967 with a large celebration, granddaughter Mary Schaff unveiled a portrait of its namesake.

That portrait—an oil painting of a White German immigrant wearing academic regalia—hung in the library for 51 years. We put it in storage while the seminary community wrestled with some challenging questions about the impact of Schaff's writings on race relations in our community and beyond. It waits there, resting and pensive while the library undergoes a metamorphosis, staying woke to racial bias and exclusion and renewing its commitment to developing collections and services that are just, equitable, and accessible.

The Lancaster Theological Seminary Library no longer bears the name of Philip Schaff. Following the Board of Trustees decision in February 2020, library and seminary staff and administrators have been hard at work implementing this change on everything from signs to documentation. Let it be noted that the removal of Schaff's name from the building is not an erasure; that would be far more problematic than letting it remain on the building. Rather, this is the beginning of a new era in which the library will continue to share its history, including the complicated legacy of Philip Schaff, and reflect more deeply on its policies and practices. We are undertaking an intentional effort to begin to make reparations for systemic racism in the library's collections and center Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) voices.

The 2018-19 Community Task Force made several recommendations that have been incorporated into the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan for Lancaster Theological Seminary. The library will be involved in some of these initiatives, including creating and installing an interactive display in the library's vestibule that educates and invites reflection on the seminary's history with regard to racism. The library is also working on outcomes we've identified and included in our integrated library plan to address systemic racism:

- We are tracking additions to our print collection that are authored by or include contributions by African Americans. In the wake of #ShutDownAcademia and #ScholarStrike, we are aware of the disproportionately small percentage of

publications by African American scholars and seek to make an impact by prioritizing these works in our collection development.

- We are reviewing library building security policies and library staff security procedures. Our goal is to examine our documented procedures under the guidance of the Seminary's security policies while incorporating resources to help library staff assess situations and determine an appropriate course of action. This includes finding alternatives to calling for police reinforcement in non-threatening situations.

This is just a beginning. There is much work to be done. At the Lancaster Theological Seminary Library, we use controlled vocabularies determined by the Library of Congress and a shelving system maintained by the Library of Congress. Unfortunately, racial bias as well as other forms of bias permeate the headings and call numbers we use in our catalog. While there are librarian activists who regularly petition the Library of Congress for change, this comes slowly and is often at the mercy of the current political climate. We are currently in the process of cleaning up headings in our catalog, which will allow us to evaluate how much bias is present in how we've described and organized our collections. Addressing this bias in our catalog will be one of our next big tasks.

The Lancaster Theological Seminary Library remains committed to supporting the mission of Lancaster Theological Seminary by actively engaging in and supporting the curation, creation, and exploration of religious and theological information. We strive to do so in ways that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are glad that you are part of our community of patrons as we begin this new chapter.