

## SPECIAL SESSION

### CRISIS IN BOOK PUBLISHING

- Topic: Our Crisis in Book Publishing: Facing the Pressures on Publishers, Libraries and (Would-be) Authors
- Moderator: Francis X. Clooney, Harvard Divinity School
- Panelists: John Jones, Editorial Director, The Crossroad Publishing Co., Herder and Herder  
Richard Brown, Director, Georgetown University Press  
Robert Ellsberg, Publisher, Orbis Books  
Jean Somers, Director, Grasselli Library and Breen Learning Center, John Carroll University  
Susan Ross, Chair, Department of Theology, Loyola University of Chicago  
Brian Robinette, Associate Professor of Theology, St. Louis University

This very well-attended breakfast discussion addressed the stresses and strains on all sides of the publishing issue today in academe: cost of books; pressures on publishers to cut back, and the reluctance of presses to publish dissertations; economic constraints and shifting information technologies that lead libraries to purchase fewer books; the pressure on all professors hoping to publish a book, but particularly on younger professors seeking tenure and finding it hard to get that first monograph in print. The brief and very informative opening presentations brought into clear light the contours of theological publishing today. Such publishing has always been at risk but, given the importance of theological exchange both among scholars and in the wider community, it will continue to find ways to flourish. Part of our task—we gathered at the CTSA and for the breakfast—is to make sure that newcomers to our field know the best practices in seeking a publisher for their work; part of our task is also to imagine together how to use the new technologies in an academically and economically responsible way, so that e-publishing proceeds to our benefit. Yet our consensus was that the publishing of books on paper would continue for the foreseeable future, alongside and in cooperation with other technologies of dissemination of theological learning. Of particular importance, certainly in the short run, is our collaboration in making sure that our youngest colleagues are able to disseminate their research and in a way that also contributes to their rightful advancement in the theological guild, including along the path to tenure.

We did not have time to draw firm conclusions from our discussion, but seemed to be in agreement that follow-up at future CTSA conventions is in order, including ventures such as sessions (possibly breakfasts) at which editors and theologians can sit down together and discuss book projects, and sessions similar to this one, at which we can collegially discuss where publishing is going, how it is opening up new and exciting possibilities, while at the same time challenging our accustomed ways of packaging research and assessing the advancement of scholars in the academy.

We also expressed our gratitude to the CTSA Board and to Executive Director Dee Christie for making the breakfast conversation possible.

FRANCIS X. CLOONEY  
*Harvard Divinity School  
Cambridge, Massachusetts*