

# Early Printed Protestant Reformation

## Material in Unites States Collections: A Preliminary Guide for Researchers

Scholars of any historical field understand the enriching and intimate realm of original artifacts. For all the convenience and importance of modern printings and the Internet, they cannot replace the study of original sources. This is not only because of the sensory experience, which is so rich and satisfying—the feel and smell of the paper, the look of dense inks, variations in printing, and the solidity of the object in hand—but also for the tangible connection to the object itself that was created, used, and distributed by those whom we study. These are among the reasons why historians and scholars in general so deeply value library and museum collections. They are what makes the important collections of early printed Reformation material in the United States compelling to explore.

The sixteenth century was unquestionably one of the most expansive times of change in the history of the modern world, many aspects of which are examined in this volume. The rapid replication and dissemination of information through the implementation of the printing press across Europe starting in the mid-fifteenth century, and a dynamic, robust climate of intellectual exploration, formed the beginnings of modern culture.

Medieval book production in Europe, while yielding glorious results, created relatively minimal numbers of books annually in a given locale because of the labor-intensive process and the expense of parchment and vellum. After the 1454 invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, printing began to spread rapidly across Europe, and by the end of the fifteenth century presses were present in over two hundred European cities, and an estimated six million books had been printed, more than had been produced by hand throughout the entire medieval period.<sup>1</sup> This new reality represented an original landscape of potential knowledge and education through literary and visual means. The shift from a manuscript culture of the medieval period to a print culture of the sixteenth century is not only significant historically, but it is also pertinent to the collections highlighted here. A culture of collecting printed material began as early as the sixteenth century, in part because the material was accessible. It was not merely the press itself that aided the movement, but rather the reformers' astute understanding of how to use its output as a new kind of active media.<sup>2</sup>

Why do strong collections of early printed Reformation material exist across the United States? The answer is perhaps simple, and also too complex to fully address here. Significant numbers of Prot-

estants have historically lived in America, with concentrations in certain geographic regions. With specific consideration to Lutherans in America from the seventeenth century on, the development of increasing numbers and organization of Lutheran synods was in part linked to the need for and subsequent establishment of seminaries and colleges to educate Lutheran clergy.<sup>3</sup> One of the first Lutheran seminaries to be established in the United States was the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* at Gettysburg in 1826,<sup>4</sup> a seminary whose library collection is mentioned below. It is an obvious, but vital, point to make: many of the highlighted collections reside in seminary and college libraries that exist as educational resources for scholars, clergy, and laity.

Some collections began from the passionate dedication of private collectors. Many of these private collections have now entered into public institutions. Others function as an educational and cultural resource open to scholars, including the *Thrivent Financial Collection of Religious Art* in Minneapolis, Minnesota. While the scope and historic range of the Thrivent Financial Collection encompasses the wider Western Christian tradition with objects from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries, within the collection are some important Reformation prints, pamphlets, and historic letters such as portraits of Reformation figures by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Hans Brosamer (fig. 1), and Sebald and Barthel Beham. Also included is a woodcut portrait of Luther by Hans Baldung Grien, which, some years ago, inspired the start of a search for connections to additional Reformation collections rich in early books and pamphlets. Baldung's popular and controversial portrait *Martin Luther as an Augustinian Friar* (see fig. 1 in the contribution of Christiane Andersson to this volume) was created in 1521 to initially illustrate the title page of the first edition of *Acts and Deeds of Dr. Martin Luther (Acta Et Res Gestae, Dr. Martini Lutheri)* published in Strasbourg in 1521 by Johann Schott, who subsequently used the portrait in multiple additional texts.

Luther's influence on the modern world extends well beyond his role as a sixteenth-century religious and cultural revolutionary. For many American Protestants, their cultural link to the notion of religious freedom is strongly related to the force started by the bold Reformers from the early modern period. For collections and institutions to gather and preserve Reformation history seems intensely pertinent to the historical Protestant American experience.



Fig. 1 Hans Brosamer (after Lucas Cranach the Elder), Martin Luther, 1530.

## Observations and Parameters

Because of space considerations this essay will avoid in-depth reflection on key Reformation books and pamphlets and instead focus on U.S. public and private library collections primarily comprising books strong in early to mid-sixteenth-century material. Some general observations are helpful to note in listing the collections. The particular background or history of an institution, and, for private collections, personal beliefs and heritage of a collector, often inform the guiding vision of the initial creation. Private collectors of this material tend to have been Protestant, for example. Strong holdings are also found in places where this material is of contextual significance, further emphasizing the immense impact of the Reformation, as with the *Folger Shakespeare Library's* Reformation collections, which enrich their understanding of the early modern world as it relates to Shakespeare.

While some libraries and institutions have a specific understanding of the number of objects among their Reformation material, many do not. This is not typically for lack of interest. Rather, the extensive scope or specific focus of some collections may have prevented a devoted cataloguing of Reformation holdings. Dedicated

funding and time necessary for specific cataloguing is not always readily available. Some institutions catalogue individual Reformation works in a subcollection within their overall holdings. Meticulous systems in place often empower the individual scholar to find the information he or she seeks, but befriending librarians and colleague scholars and enlisting their expertise and guidance is also certainly an invaluable part of the research process.

While this essay intends to serve as a guide to scholars, it is by no means exhaustive. There are undoubtedly a great number of places in the United States where original sources and early editions can be consulted. This essay seeks to highlight collections with volumes considered exceptional in number, scope, or rarity, and that feature first editions and early printings. Websites for the highlighted collections will be referenced and included in footnotes and bibliography to offer quick direction; in our highly digital age, these typically offer the most current updates. Some collections have a more detailed web presence than others. To be sure, the exploration of collections set forth here must be considered a starting point.

With access to collection catalogues, ability to search databases, and scanned material increasingly available online, scholars have access to more information than ever before, a situation akin to the explosion of knowledge from the invention of the printing press. Preliminary research nearly always begins online today. In the initial creation of lists of collections, some of the most wide-ranging stand out because they highlight their Reformation holdings and programming. But, also, in searching WorldCat for important works across the United States, it became clearer where a great deal of material is to be found. In exploring this topic, two superb collections—and exemplars of this topic—were visited: the *Folger Shakespeare Library* and the *Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection*. Additional history and background on these collections will be provided.

## Collections

The *Lutheran Theological Seminary* at Gettysburg maintains the *A. R. Wentz Library*, with extensive holdings of rare and significant Reformation books and imprints.<sup>5</sup> This seminary is one of the oldest Lutheran seminaries in the United States, with a robust history of religious education. The *University of Illinois* at Urbana–Champaign keeps a large number of Reformation-period materials in its *Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, along with strong holdings of incunabula (books printed with movable type before 1500).<sup>6</sup>

*J. S. Bridwell Library* in the *Perkins School of Theology* at *Southern Methodist University* in Dallas, Texas, has in-depth special collections devoted to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, of some five

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, *Germany*, p. 35. <sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive exploration of printing during this time see Edwards, *Printing*. <sup>3</sup> Granquist, *Lutherans*, p. 151. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>5</sup> Gettysburg Seminary, *A. R. Wentz Library*. Because of the close contextual relationship with books printed prior to 1500, called incunabula, they will be mentioned as pertaining to highlighted collections. Such material is historically collected not only for its content but also for the books' place in the history of printing. <sup>6</sup> University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, *Book Collections*.

thousand objects.<sup>7</sup> *Concordia Seminary* in St. Louis, Missouri, has extensive holdings related to the Protestant Reformation and early modern period, a Center for Reformation Research, and a rare-book collection of approximately 5,700 volumes composed of several specific groupings that can be browsed by call number or series search.<sup>8</sup>

Some collections, while small in size, are nevertheless notable. The *Gruber Rare Books Collection*, housed at the *JKM Library*<sup>9</sup> serving the *Lutheran School of Theology* at Chicago, contains some three hundred books from the early modern period. Among the holdings are a copy of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, the *Theologia Deutsch* (Luther's first publication of 1516), copies of the September and December testaments of 1522, Erasmus's second edition of the Greek New Testament, the 1534 Bible translation by Luther, and original editions of the 1529 *Large Catechism*, Augsburg Confession (1530), and *Achtliederbuch*, the first Lutheran hymnal (1524).<sup>10</sup> It comes as no surprise that the collection, amassed by L. Franklin Gruber in the early twentieth century, focuses on Reformation material—Gruber was formerly the president of a Lutheran seminary, *Maywood Seminary*.

Preservation of institutional heritage is sometimes wonderfully expressed through rare-book collections: *Augustana University* in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, holds a number of examples by Luther and Melancthon in its special collections. Among them are four sixteenth-century editions of the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*), the source from which the college's name derives.<sup>11</sup>

Columbia University's *Burke Library* at *Union Theological Seminary*, in New York City, houses a special collection in its rare books and manuscripts department known as the *Reformation Tracts Collection*. The *Burke* is one of the largest theological libraries in North America, and much of its large collection's creation dates to 1838 with the seminary's acquisition of a large portion of the library of Benedictine monk and German biblical scholar Leander van Ess, containing manuscripts, thousands of early printed books and pamphlets, and incunabula.<sup>12</sup>

A great number of early printed Reformation sources are found in Princeton, New Jersey, among *Princeton University's* impressive and immense collections. In the Princeton Theological Seminary *Rare Book and Pamphlet Collections* are numerous early examples including bibles, and objects related to the German and Swiss reformations. Princeton's holdings comprise several distinct collections as well as miscellaneous objects. The *Trendelenburg Collection*, acquired around the 1870s, contains some one hundred Reformation tracts, featuring sermons and controversial pamphlets.<sup>13</sup> Of special note is the *Scheide Library*,<sup>14</sup> which has resided on the grounds at Princeton for many decades but was bequeathed after the recent passing of William H. Scheide in 2015. Between the Rare Books and Scheide Library collections, Princeton's historical and rare Bible and incunabula holdings are comprehensive and astounding.

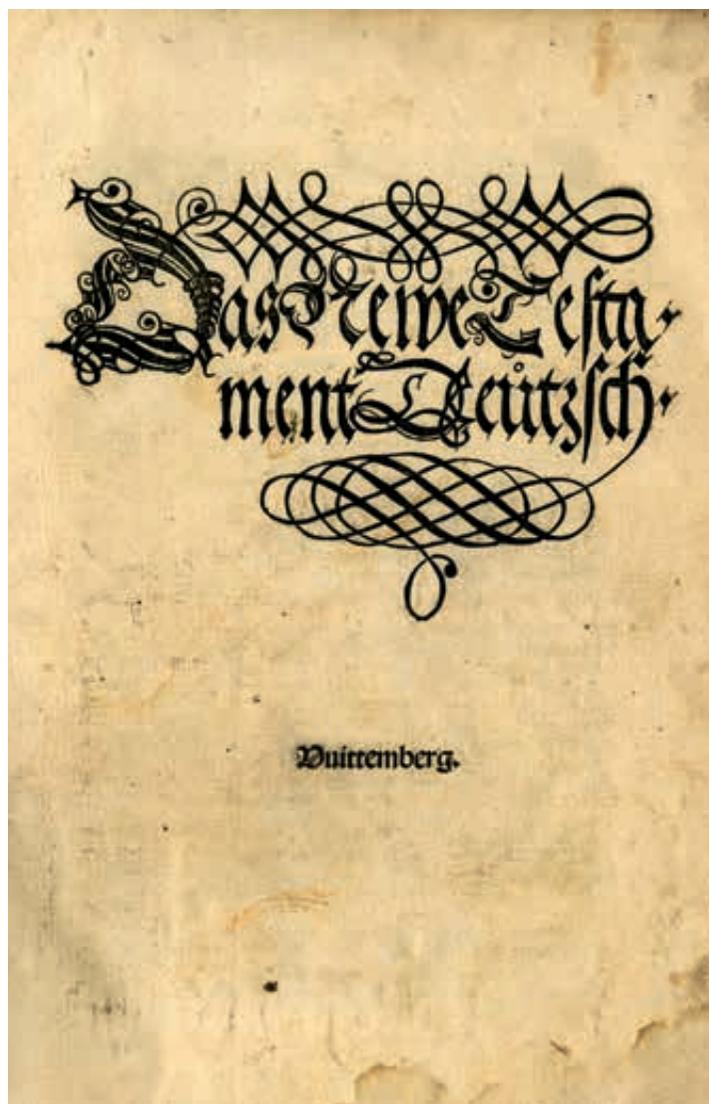


Fig. 2 Martin Luther, *Das Neue Testament Deutsch* (The New Testament [in] German), Wittenberg 1522 (so-called September Testament).

Early twentieth-century alumnus Bernhard K. Schaefer made a gift of some two hundred pamphlets and books by Luther around 1956.<sup>15</sup> The *Schaefer collection* was enriched in 1967 with 170 additional objects, a gift that was illuminated in an exhibition commemorating the 450th anniversary of Luther's nailing of the theses.<sup>16</sup> A rarity of the second gift of the Schaefer collection was a first edition of the Ninety-Five Theses, the *Disputatio* (Basel: Adam Petri, 1517). The exhibition contained objects from the Schaefer and Scheide collections, as well as the special collections.<sup>17</sup> A coherent distillation of the collection's significance, first used in 1967 and still found today

7 Southern Methodist University, *Reformation and Counter-Reformation*. 8 Concordia Seminary, *Reformation Resources*. 9 The official name of the library currently. "JKM" combines initials from three previously separated institutions, and refers historically to Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick. 10 Klein, *Rare Books Collections*. 11 Augustana University, *Books in Special Collections*. 12 Columbia University Libraries, *The Burke Library Collection*. 13 Bishop,

*German Reformation Pamphlets*, p. 183. 14 Princeton University Library, *Scheide Library*. 15 Harbison, *Luther Pamphlets*, p. 266. 16 Wagner, *Luther Exhibition*, p. 103. 17 Ibid. 18 Ibid; Princeton University Library, *Scheide Library*. 19 Barbock, *Early Books*. 20 Ibid. 21 Ohio State University Libraries, *The Harold J. Grimm Reformation Collection*. 22 The Newberry, *Religion*. The rare-book collections at the Newberry are composed of acquisitions from numer-

on the special-collections website, emphasizes Luther's "force as a fomentor, disputant, tractarian, and theologian; his importance as a translator of the Bible; and his influence beyond central Europe, and especially in America."<sup>18</sup>

The history of printing as much as the textual information contained within has long informed the acquisitions of early books and manuscripts in the *Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* at *Yale University* in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>19</sup> The superb scope of the collections has been enhanced for decades by significant gifts and active acquisitions. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, surging in the 1970s, and continuing today, the Beinecke library has maintained a strong commitment to acquiring original editions of Luther's works as well as Reformation pamphlets.<sup>20</sup>

Passionate scholar-collectors have certainly been a crucial source of many fine Reformation collections in the United States. One such collector was Harold J. Grimm, an educator, writer, and historian in Ohio and Indiana, who slowly collected Reformation-era books and pamphlets during his lifetime. These form the core of the *Harold J. Grimm Reformation Collection* at *Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, which now numbers over 550 rare books by Reformation figures.<sup>21</sup>

The *Newberry Library* in Chicago has extensive holdings on religion and theology in general, ranging from church history and canon law to sacred music and manuscripts. Rare books relating to religious reform are the highlights, with examples of Protestant and Catholic political and religious tracts, pamphlets, and pedagogy.<sup>22</sup>

The *Harry Ransom Center* at the *University of Texas* at Austin has particularly strong religious holdings covering a range of historical sources related to Judaism and Christianity. Among the Ransom Center's collections is a rare copy of the Gutenberg Bible,<sup>23</sup> one of only forty-eight surviving copies, and an invaluable contextual resource for studying the history of the printing press as related to the Reformation. Sixteenth-century editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* for the service of the Church of England and an autographed manuscript of Martin Luther's *De Elevatione* are additional objects of note.<sup>24</sup>

Special collections of the *Sheridan Libraries* at *Johns Hopkins University* in Baltimore, Maryland, contain substantial material and emphasis related to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in their libraries' philosophy and religion departments. Vernacular biblical translations, along with numerous pamphlets and works by first- and second-generation Reformers, are to be found.<sup>25</sup>

In Washington, D. C., at the *Library of Congress*, within the *Rare Book and Special Collections Division*, are groupings referred to as the *Reformation Collection* and the *Luther Collection*. Many imprints by Luther at the library, along with an outstanding array of contextual material from an enormous collection of incunabula, vast sixteenth-century material, early vernacular bibles, and the *Medieval and Re-*

ous religious institutions in the Chicago area. **23** The Ransom Center copy of the Gutenberg Bible is one of only five complete copies in the United States. Formerly known as the "Pforzheimer copy," it was acquired by the Ransom Center in 1978. **24** Harry Ransom Center, *Religion*. **25** Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums, *Reformation*. **26** Library of Congress, *Europe*. **27** Houghton Library, *Early Books & Manuscripts Collection*. **28** Andover-Har-



Fig. 3 Lucas Cranach the Elder, Illustration of the Book of Revelation (Satan bound), from Martin Luther, *Das Neue Testament Deutsch* (The New Testament [in] German), Wittenberg 1522 (so-called September Testament).

*naissance Manuscript Collection* all make for a rich resource for Reformation scholars.<sup>26</sup>

*Harvard University's Early Books and Manuscripts Collection* at the *Houghton Library* in Cambridge, Massachusetts, holds extremely abundant early material. Their copious Reformation holdings are among a vast collection with early examples dating from 3000 B.C.E. to 1600 C.E. (and continuing to the present day in other collections).<sup>27</sup> Harvard has extensive collections of medieval manuscripts as well as incunabula, additionally enriching the research experience for visiting scholars. Complementary to the material in

vard Theological Library, *Historical Collections*. **29** Personal Interview with library director, Dr. M. Patrick Graham, October 29, 2015. Details regarding the history of the creation and growth of the Kessler collection came out of this in-person interview. **30** In-person interviews with Folger staff: Dr. Michael Witmore, director; Daniel De Simone, Eric Weinmann librarian; and Dr. Georgianna Ziegler, Louis B. Thalheimer Associate Librarian and Head of Reference, October

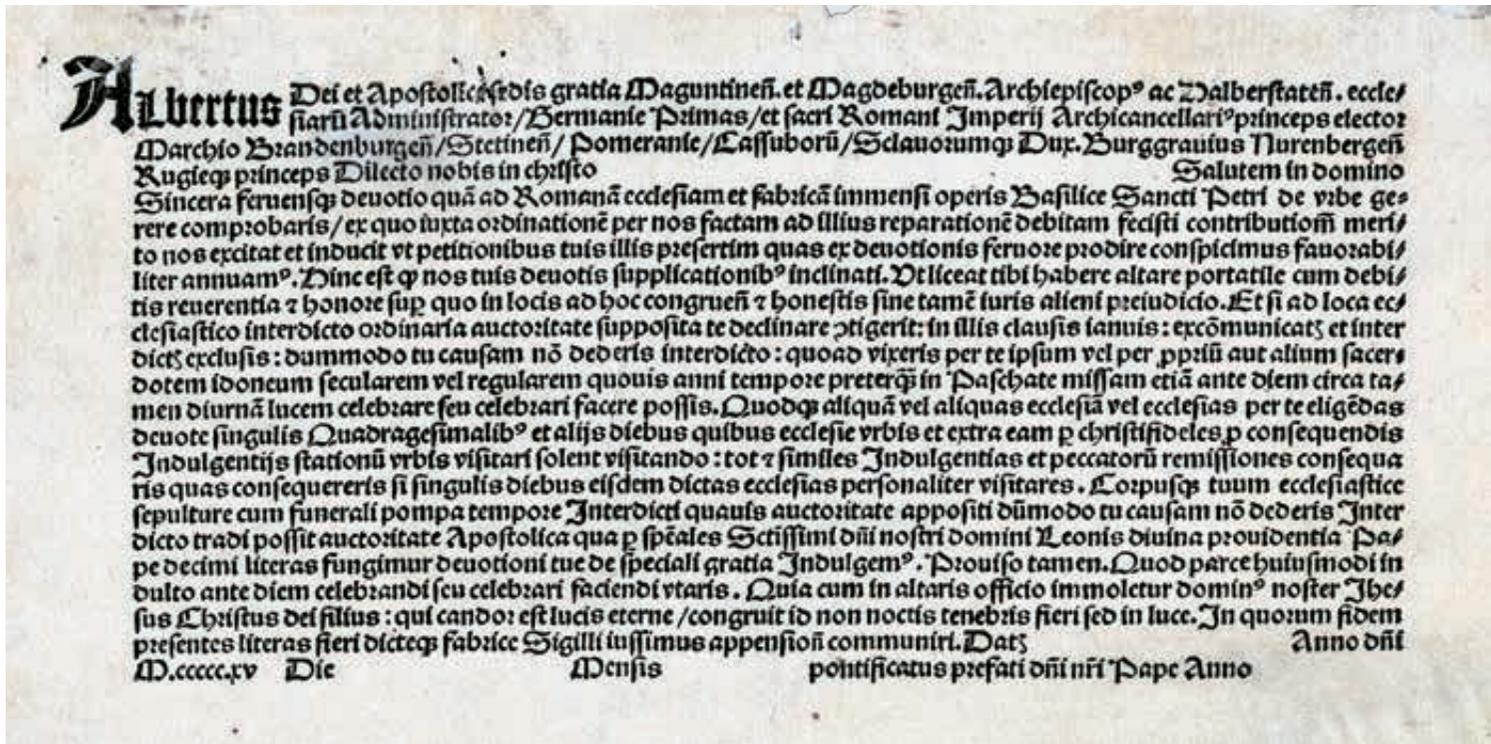


Fig. 4 A letter of indulgence with unfilled empty spaces published by the Archbishopric of Mainz under the auspices of Archbishop Albert of Brandenburg 1515.

the Houghton Library are additional significant holdings in the *Andover-Harvard Theological Library for Harvard Divinity School*.<sup>28</sup> The Harvard collections constitute one of the largest resources for Reformation scholars in the country.

Another comprehensive collection in the United States is the *Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection*, housed at *Emory University's Pitts Theology Library* in Atlanta, Georgia, which was established in 1987. With nearly 3,700 books, pamphlets, prints, and manuscripts dating from 1500 to 1570, and over 1,040 items by Luther alone, this collection of rare and valuable documents is an outstanding example of a dedicated assemblage of Protestant Reformation material. The fact that Martin Luther published more during his lifetime than all of his colleagues informs the collecting principles of the Kessler collection, which strives to continuously acquire all examples included in Josef Benzing's thorough listing, *Lutherbibliographie*.<sup>29</sup> Such objects constitute only part of the acquisitions scope of the Kessler collection, which already includes examples by many of Luther's contemporaries on numerous topics. This collection and its digital-image archive are invaluable resources for scholars and students.

Scholarship drives all the programming content and acquisitions for the Kessler collection, and its formation arose from the passionate commitment of several individuals. The dynamic name behind the collection is collector Richard C. Kessler, who, along with his wife, Martha, is primary supporter and benefactor. A significant number of Reformation objects at the Pitts Library came originally from the immense acquisition of 220,000 objects from the library of the *Hartford Seminary Foundation* around 1975, containing some one thousand Reformation objects. Under the direction of Dr. Channing

Renwick Jeschke, this acquisition helped establish the *Candler School of Theology* among the nation's top theological libraries. Jeschke, also a church historian, became acquainted with Kessler in the 1980s through board work at a theological seminary. Kessler, a Lutheran layperson, asked Jeschke for guidance in creating a collection emphasizing key Reformation works with the intent that the collection reside at the Pitts. With Kessler's involvement, and under the direction of the current Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography and director of the library, Dr. M. Patrick Graham, the collection continues to expand.

Special highlights include a 1522 first edition of Luther's translation of the New Testament, *The September Testament* (figs. 2 and 3), with its bold woodcut illustrations by Lucas Cranach the Elder, including twenty-one illustrations of the book of Revelation after Albrecht Dürer's seminal *The Revelations of John the Divine* or *Apocalypse* series of 1498; an indulgence, 1515, issued by the Catholic Church, archdiocese of Mainz (fig. 4); twenty-eight papal bulls; a first edition of Philipp Melancthon's *Loci communes*; numerous catechisms and hymnals; and the five first editions of Erasmus's Greek New Testament.

With a welcoming rare-book study room for scholars, the Pitts regularly receives researchers. *Emory University* is notable too for its annual Reformation Day celebration and programming. In scope and size, the Kessler collection is undoubtedly one of, if not the, most comprehensive Reformation collections in the country (fig. 5).

One of the other major European Reformation collections is found within the vast collections of early modern material in the esteemed *Folger Shakespeare Library* in Washington, D.C. Works by Luther as well as many other important Reformers such as Martin

Bucer, John Calvin, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Philipp Melanchthon, and Ulrich Zwingli are found there. As is true for the *Kessler collection*, woodcut illustrations by Hans Holbein and Lucas Cranach the Elder are abundant in many books and pamphlets. Throughout the history of the Folger, various library directors and librarians have recognized the vitality and importance of the Reformation within the history of the early modern period, a fact that has inspired continual acquisitions; Benzing's *Lutherbibliographie* is consulted annually for new accessions.<sup>30</sup>

The *Folger's* holdings on the continental Reformation are made up of two collections, and of various individual objects. The first grouping came as a part of a larger collection from English collector Sir Thomas Phillips; in 1958 a sizeable number of Reformation pamphlets was acquired for the library within the Phillips collection acquisition. This added 250 Reformation pamphlets to the Folger collections. In the annual report of 1978, in which details of the Stickelberger collection's acquisition are noted, the then director O. B. Hardison, Jr., reflects that the 1950s had been "a particularly active time at the Folger for the study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious thought in England, with particular emphasis on the Nonconformists."<sup>31</sup> He goes on to write that scholars then connected to the library recommended specifically the further acquisition of continental Reformation material.<sup>32</sup> Cultivation of collaborative relationships among Folger staff and European colleagues at the Erasmushaus in Basel<sup>33</sup> was apparently encouraged and recognized as having led to the Folger's initially being offered the Stickelberger collection in 1976, followed by the successful acquisition of the second-largest collection of Reformation material for the library in 1977, with the acquisition of the Dr. Emanuel Stickelberger collection en bloc at auction in Basel.<sup>34</sup> Stickelberger was a Swiss collector and scholar whose amassed material on the Reformation numbered 870 objects at the time of the Folger acquisition, 180 of which were titles by Luther, with a number of additional examples by Erasmus, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Calvin.<sup>35</sup> The catalogue written on the occasion of the Stickelberger acquisition reflects that its inclusion at the Folger, "one of the world's greatest and most beautiful libraries," is wonderfully consistent as "a pleasure and a help to many more bibliophiles and scholars," Stickelberger, having been a bibliophile as well as a serious scholar, profoundly studied these works with an eye toward the creation of novels, plays, and other writings.<sup>36</sup> Many examples in the Stickelberger collection were re-bound by the collector; their contents or bindings were actually covered with sheets from incunabula.

Since the earlier acquisitions, many hundreds of additional relevant objects have been acquired. While the Folger enjoys a stellar reputation, and heartily welcomes researchers from all over the world, its impressive Reformation holdings are little known to scholars. Highlights of the Folger holdings include a Basel edition of the *December Testament*, Luther's translation of the New Testament; numerous works by Luther (including Luther Bibles), Zwingli, and



Fig. 5 Books from the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University Atlanta.

Melanchthon, with numerous polemical pamphlets and biblical translations; and a small, rare, unrecorded prayer book, *Ein Betbüchlin*. Various important incunabula further enrich study. Understandably, their holdings include impressive material related to the English and Swiss reformations.

In 1983 an exhibition was organized at the Folger to mark the quincentenary of the birth of Martin Luther, in collaboration with the *Lutheran Council of the United States of America*, the University of Maryland, and the *Lutheran Church of the Reformation* in Washington, D.C.; a small catalogue was produced, with support from *Lutheran Brotherhood*.<sup>37</sup> Any serious study of the printed material of the Reformation makes clear not only how influential and profoundly brilliant a thinker and theologian Luther was, but also how many gifted scholars, writers, and other Reformers were contemporarily active. This preliminary survey of collections illuminates the vibrant time in which Luther lived as much as it does his contributions to Western history. The Reformation was a defining time for the development and expansion of the modern world, challenging core ideas and inspiring freedoms that we continue to wrest with today.

These collections taken as a whole reflect a shared commitment to history, individual collectors' passionate approaches to preservation and study, and, often, the laudable desire to make these resources available. For some of the institutions and collectors, recognition of heritage is additionally related. All scholars of this remarkable time period will wish to participate in the humanistic tradition of returning *ad fontes*, "to the sources." After all, this is foundational to Luther's scholarship and writing and, ultimately, the Reformation as a whole. Happily, in the United States, a rich abundance of locations exist in which to make this possible.

24, 2015. Many historical details about the collection formation resulted from in-person research and interviews. <sup>31</sup> Hardison, *Folger Shakespeare Library*. <sup>32</sup> Ibid. <sup>33</sup> Erasmushaus is an antiquarian book dealer in Switzerland, since

1800. <sup>34</sup> Hardison, *Folger Shakespeare Library*. <sup>35</sup> Ibid. <sup>36</sup> Sebass/Sebass/Tammann, *Reformation*, p. 5. <sup>37</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, *Martin Luther*.

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