World Council of Churches

The Faith and Order Papers Project

Executive Summary

This prospectus outlines a project to digitize a major collection of papers, reports, and books known as the Faith and Order Papers and to make them available for research and study to scholars, theologians and students around the world.

Background

The Faith and Order Papers, comprising more than 300 publications that embody more than 100 years of serious and sustained reflection on the core issues of Christian faith, are planned to appear in electronic form for the first time.

The cumulative work of the Faith and Order Commission, the papers are an invaluable theological reference as well as indispensable historical window into the prolonged process by which ecumenical Christianity has, over the last century, engrained itself in the self-understanding of Christians around the world.

In this plan, *The Faith and Order Papers: A Digital Resource* will be digitized and made available to individuals and institutions by subscription. Then, in a possible second stage of development, they will become a lynchpin of a larger *Ecumenical Research Library* online, containing many other key works of the ecumenical movement, grounded in a fully integrated electronic platform, updated regularly, and made available to hundreds of thousands of students and scholars around the world, chiefly through subscriptions by academic libraries worldwide.

Description

The Faith and Order Papers consist in two series. The first, published between 1910 and 1948, are the communications, pamphlets, study documents, and reports of participants in the process leading up to and following the 1920, 1927, and 1937 meetings of the World Conference on Faith and Order. They are, as it were, foundational documents of the nascent movement toward Christian unity, especially as it pertained to matters of teaching and doctrine.

The second series, constituted at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, continued under the direction of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. They comprise 214 items, published from 1948 to today, from Commission

and Working Group pamphlets to reports and minutes to full-scale monographs on the chief topics of 70 years of Faith and Order studies and dialogues.

Need/Market

Most of the Faith and Order Papers are currently unavailable commercially and not accessible except in certain specialized theological libraries and archives. Many libraries do not have the complete collection. Further, as libraries are more and more accessed online, there is a need for major research materials, like the Faith and Order Papers, to be transitioned digitally. Digitizing the papers will not only ensure their preservation; it will thrust the whole corpus more prominently into the scholarly and teaching scene.

Approximately 40,000 professors of religion and related disciplines teach in colleges, universities, and seminaries worldwide. About half of them belong to professional societies. Recent market research indicates that there are about 5000 academic libraries in European and North American colleges, universities, and seminaries. In addition, approximately 2000 other academic libraries are located in the global south.

In this field, as in other academic disciplines, resources are increasingly digital. With online databases, ebooks, and other web-based collections, scholars and students are able to research topics in their disciplines directly from their desktops, laptops, or even cellphones. Most students, and many scholars, research exclusively in digital sources. Many scholars and students would appreciate being able to own or have permanent access to serious biblical and theological resources for their chief areas of research. Libraries prize integrated digital collections, especially in areas of specialization or concentrated acquisition, because they enable the library to expand its collections, enhance usability, continually update, and save space.

Analogous Projects

Because the Faith and Order Papers are a unique collection, there are no directly competing projects. But a dozen or so of analogous projects exist in downloadable or subscription form or both, many in biblical studies:

> Twentieth-Century Religious Thought
> > http://alexanderstreet.com/products/twentieth-century-religious-thought-volume-i-christianity
> Barth's *Church Dogmatics*
> > *https://www.logos.com/product/5758/barths-church-dogmatics*
> Hermeneia and Continental Commentaries
> > h*ttps://www.logos.com/product/43469/hermeneia-and-c*ontinental-commentaries
> Martin Luther's Works
> > *https://www.logos.com/product/15485/luthers-works*
> *New Interpreter's Bible* on CD-ROM
> > *https://www.amazon.com/New-Interpreters-Bible-Commentary-Commentaries/dp/0687019990*

> *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*
> > *https://www.biblegateway.com/nivzsb/*
> Oxford Islamic Studies Online
> > http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/Home.html?url=%2Fapp%3Fservice%3Dexternalpagemethod%26method%3Dview%26page%3DHome&failReason=

Plan

This project's aim is to capture the text of the documents and place them into an integrated, fully searchable format for easy access and cross-referencing by students, scholars, historians, and theologians. More than PDFs, the resource needs to be digitally exact to enable the search functions to work.

The online version itself will have many helpful features: It enables the user to highlight, annotate, bookmark, and take notes at specific locations. Hoverlinks enable the reader to navigate quickly to other sections and cross-referenced material. Original pagination is preserved, and key terms and biblical references are accessed through easy hover-linking.

Capturing the texts digitally also enables the WCC to put the material on a single, updatable platform for subscription by academic and theological libraries around the world, as well as by individuals. With such a platform available, the Faith & Order Papers can later be combined with other digitally captured legacy and reference material to publish in a variety of formats and media and, eventually, to combine them into an *Ecumenical Research Library.* So the Faith and Order Papers can be the first of several collections that can be published and integrated in this way.

For the Faith & Order Papers project itself, it is envisioned that it will be headed by the F&O director, Odair Mateus Pedroso as General Editor, working with a managing editor, who will in turn work with several asocial editors and the project's vendors to ensure accurate completion of the project and a fully functioning website. The project will also draw on the advice and expertise of a half-dozen other scholars with in-depth knowledge of the corpus and gathered in a Board of Advisors. Also desirable, especially in the initial phases is to work with a consultant with expertise in digital publishing, particularly in religious studies and theology. Such a person can advise us on key questions about capturing the text, the platform features and needs, possible licensing or other arrangements, costs and pricing, and publishing strategy.

Development

Stages in development of digital files include:

- Determination of contents

- Devising a taxonomy of headings, hoverlinked items, and features
- Capturing the text in digital form from physical copies and WCC Library microfilms
- Checking or ensuring the accuracy of the captured text
- Developer designs and builds the platform and flows the content into it
- Developer posts beta version for checking
- WCC develops communications and promotional plan and materials
- Initial promotion in advance of release
- Publication and initial marketing

Publishing Strategy

The publishing plan calls for two stages. In the first phase, the content of the papers, along with some licensed material (Bibles, historical dictionary) would be housed on a fully integrated, searchable digital platform for subscription by academic theological libraries and individuals. (A key decision is whether that database should be licensed to a publisher/aggregator or simply published and sold by the WCC.) Over a two-year period, the project will be marketed through advertising, direct mail, emails to members of the relevant academic societies, and exhibition at academic meetings. This can be done through a licensed partner or on our own.

In a second phase, the *Faith and Order Papers* will be combined with other digital reference works captured by the WCC, including the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement,* the three volumes of *A History of the Ecumenical Movement,* and/or collected material from the CCIA, the CWME, the governance bodies, or archival collections. They will be placed on the same digital platform in an integrated and multilayered resource for subscription by academic libraries worldwide. This resource, the *Ecumenical Research Library,* will be updated annually with new publications and features.

Proposal

In view of the churches' and ecumenical partners' decades-long engagement with and support of the work of the Faith and Order Commission, it is hoped that they will likewise support the first phase of this effort to bring the work of Faith and Order to the scholarly community and a new generation. Further, it is hoped that such a partnership, carefully and fully acknowledged in the material, would result in concrete input into the development of the material itself.

Budget and Schedule

A framework budget (in CHF) for this project follows:

Phase	Timing	Expense
Project framing	Spring 2017	0
Consultant study	Summer 2017	0
Capturing of text	Jan-June 2017	??

Software devlpt/applic.	January-June 2017	??
Testing and announcement	Sept. 2017	??
Publication	Nov. 2017	??
Total	12 months	??

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