



BETH

Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie

BETH Bulletin 2026

No. 04

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In Memoriam

Melody Jane Mazuk (1957 - 2026)

Marian Papavoine

Retired Theology and Humanities Subject Librarian
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Melody Mazuk passed away suddenly on April 4th 2026, while walking in Valley Forge National Park, one of her favourite places. It was a huge shock to hear this. I had texted with her only that morning about a word game we both played.

I met Melody for the first time in 2006. I was in Rome for my first-ever BETH meeting, after which we maintained regular contact. Before the 2007 BETH Conference in Emden, she and Eileen Crawford visited me in Tilburg. I have included Eileen's tribute in memoriam to Melody below, who wrote this originally for the Atlantis mailing list and filled in some background for me:

"Melody devoted her life to theological librarianship and the global advancement of theological education. She began her work at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon, Switzerland (1980–1983), serving as a librarian with the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board before continuing under a special contract.

She earned her Master of Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh in 1984 and went on to serve as Assistant Librarian at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1984-1992).

Her longest tenure was at Palmer Seminary, where she served as Library Director from 1992 to 2012. During these years, she played an active leadership role in professional organisations, including the American Theological Library Association, where she served on the Board (1998-2001) and helped found its International Committee in 2000/2001. She also contributed to the Commission on Accreditation of the Association of Theological Schools.

After leaving Palmer Seminary, Melody's passion for strengthening theological education extended worldwide through her work as Director of Library Development at Resource Leadership International. She travelled extensively, consulting with seminaries, developing collections, and building lasting relationships across cultures.

She concluded her formal career as Interim Library Director at Princeton Theological Seminary (2016-2017)."

Melody and BETH

In 2000, Atla's June conference was held in San Francisco. Andre Geuns and Penelope Hall represented BETH at the conference and hosted a session introducing BETH. BETH's 2000 assembly was held in York, England, in September. It was a joint meeting between ABTAPL and BETH. Due to the location, the sessions were held in English for the first time. Andre and Penelope invited all who had attended their San Francisco session to attend this conference.

Atla created an international committee at the end of 2000. Melody and Eileen were selected to be on this first committee because they attended the York Conference. From then on, Melody and Eileen attended BETH meetings regularly. They paid for these meetings from their personal funds because they believed in the importance of making connections. In the 2003 BETH Conference, Melody met Sister Rebecca Abel and Sister Norma, American librarians working at the North American College in Rome. It became an annual pleasure to meet with colleagues from all over the world over the years. The last meeting that Melody, Eileen and Sister Rebecca attended together was in Croatia in 2017.

In Eileen's words:

"Melody's influence continued through the many friendships she cultivated and the countless institutions she strengthened. Melody is remembered not only for her professional excellence, but for her generosity, curiosity, and deep commitment to the global community of theological educators."

Melody's obituary is available to read through this link:

<https://www.legacy.com/legacy/melody-mazuk>

Judy Smith-Blow

Former Theological Librarian, Spurgeon's College, London, UK

As were so many of us, I was so shocked to hear of the sudden death of Melody Mazuk, a long-standing friend and member of ABTAPL. There have been many tributes paid to her which show what a special person she was, as well as a wonderful obituary put together by her family:

https://www.legacy.com/legacy/melody-mazuk?ttm_pid=211247135&ttm_affiliate=legacyremembers&ttm_affiliatetype=standard&ttm_campaign=legacy. This is my own personal tribute to Melody.

I first met Melody in the mid 1980's when she visited Spurgeon's College where I had just joined the staff as Librarian and Archivist. Melody had come to see the College's Heritage Room where the C.H. Spurgeon archive was housed. In fact, at that time she probably knew more about Spurgeon than I did, as she came from a Baptist background whereas mine had been Methodist. I was so new to the staff that I hadn't yet acquired the knowledge about the College's founder that Melody had. But Melody was very gracious and thanked me for taking the time to show her the collection.

One of my favourite memories of Melody occurred during the joint BETH-ABTAPL conference held in York in 2000, during which one of the options for delegates was to visit the Bar Convent in the city centre. A few of us enjoyed a most interesting tour, ending in the Convent's chapel where the lovely nun showing us around pointed out their most precious relic, the preserved hand of Saint Margaret Clitherow, who was martyred in York in 1586. As the hand in its glass container was covered by a cloth, the nun asked if we would like her to remove the covering. All except one of us quickly said, "No, thank you," but Melody's enthusiastic "Yes, please!" won the day and the hand was duly revealed. I'm not too sure that the rest of us appreciated Melody's enthusiasm on that particular day!

In recent years, Melody came regularly to help at St Bede's Library, Ealing Abbey. Whenever she came to the U.K., she always got in touch to see if we could meet up. A few highlights come to mind. In July 2018, she and Sister Rebecca Abel from St Bede's Library joined me and former ABTAPL Chair, Alan Linfield, for a day trip to Oxford. We had a great day out, especially as Alan, an alumnus of the University of Oxford, was able to get us access to many colleges which otherwise would not have been open to visitors.

In 2019, Melody and I met up at Dulwich Picture Gallery, close to my home, before the ABTAPL Autumn meeting at William Booth College. She liked the Gallery so much that we met again in 2022, once the global pandemic travel restrictions were over, for lunch and the exhibition *Reframed: The Woman in the Window*, which was the first exhibition to investigate this particular motif. We greatly enjoyed it. In July 2023, Melody, Alan, and I got together in London - a memorable itinerary beginning at the British Library, continuing via the Docklands Light Railway to Greenwich, a walk along the Thames Path, and ending by taking the cable car over the Thames. I'm not sure that Melody was a lover of cable cars, but, as was typical of her, Melody went with it!

In January 2024, Melody was in the UK accompanied by her friend and colleague Eileen Crawford (who was also present at the 2000 York conference). Alan, another former ABTAPL Chair, Carol Reekie, and I had a wonderful day with them, starting at the British Library and walking along the Regent's Canal to Camden Locks, ending with, of course, a pub lunch.

More recently, we met in Oxford. In advance of our last meeting, Melody had asked us to source plant-based Nutella (unobtainable back home) for one of her young relatives, so Alan and I dutifully arrived with our jars of vegan-friendly chocolate spread. Melody's suitcase must have been very heavy on her return trip to the US! We were due to have another get-together this summer. I'm so sad that this is not to be.

During all these visits, there has always been a wonderful flow of conversation, permeated by much laughter as we reminisced, shared stories, and put the world to rights.

These are just a few of my memories of Melody. She was an amazing friend and will be sorely missed. I shall never forget her.