

**Department of Information Technology (DIT) Annual Student and Faculty Survey –
March 2011
Digital Projects Survey: Executive Summary**

This year's DIT Annual Survey focused on Digital Projects and was distributed to students and faculty via email in February 2011. As seminaries, universities, and colleges--not to mention for-profit organizations like publishers and Google--move to organize intellectual content/expertise, and package and produce new material in the form of (either free or for-fee) digital projects like the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at Stanford University and Luther Seminary's Enter the Bible, PTS was eager to learn what outside digital projects students and faculty regularly use in their own scholarly work, how they locate and assess the reliability of digital projects, and what creative ideas both constituents have for possible future digital projects that PTS could uniquely contribute to the field.

Response was modest with 32 student and 4 faculty respondents.

Student respondents reported relying on professors, peers, search engines (including Google, Google Books, and Google Scholar), footnotes and bibliographies, the Reference Librarian, Amazon, academic library catalogs, blogs, and social networking sites to locate new digital projects of interest. When looking for new digital resources, many students report often relying on what some librarians refer to as "research serendipity" (or as one PTS student respondent calls "sheer dumb luck") when finding new digital resources. Not surprisingly, the desire for organized/thematic resource guides of these types of projects was expressed by multiple students. In addition to library catalogs and subscription databases offered through the PTS and Princeton University libraries (Oxford, ATLA, JSTOR, etc.), students report using digital projects and resources like Calvin College's Christian Classics Ethereal Library, H-Net.org, TLG, a variety of general-subject online encyclopedias and dictionaries, Wikipedia, Blue Letter Bible, Text Week, Bible Gateway, Oremus Bible Browser, Past Masters, Whitaker's Words, the Digital Karl Barth Library by Alexander Street Press, Tertullian Project, Unbound Bible, Biblia.com and others. To assess the academic credibility of digital resources, students consult most frequently with their professors or the Reference Librarian, examine the qualifications of a project's editorial board, or confirm if the project is cited by respected scholars, peer-reviewed, and/or affiliated with an academic institution.

Student respondents offered a wide range of ideas for potential digital projects, including the development of more language/textual resources online; the digitization of the Society of Inquiry materials and the Latin American/Spanish language materials from the PTS archives; resources focusing on the ancient world; an historical catalog/archive of sermons; an exegesis resource; a theological encyclopedia or resource on modern Reformed theology; and resources highlighting current departmental work and the Barth, Pauline, Calvin, and youth ministry work already occurring at PTS. Several students identified specific projects, including a "Reformed

Devotions" resources pairing historical Reformed theologians with "modern pastors reflecting on how their work lets them look differently at these historical giants," and "PTS could create the theological equivalent of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy...such a resource is badly needed." Several student respondents expressed a desire for "course lectures online like Harvard does," resources that would continue to serve them after leaving seminary (that "could be helpful in the parish"), and resources for alums.

Similarly, faculty respondents report relying on Google, peer recommendations, links from websites and/or footnotes and bibliographies, professional association website links, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to find new digital projects of interest. In addition to library databases, resources like Google Books, Perseus, and TLG were cited by faculty, who also rely on university association, peer-reviewed status, and known scholar links to determine if digital projects have adequate academic credibility; some faculty are including in their syllabi general guidelines for students on assessing the authority of online resources. Faculty respondents offered several ideas for potential digital projects, including an introductory online dictionary/concept resource that would guide first year theology students in their work; a theology and science resource; major PTS campus lectures; Barth Center material; and an "MIT-like trove" of faculty lecture and resources.