

The Academic Bulletin

from the Office of the Provost of Calvin College

Thursday, March 29, 2018

Cultural Mandate and Libraries

Humanity are created beings, yet, as image bearers we too are creators. We are shapers and formers. We seek and bring order. We are reminded in the creation narrative that “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground’ ” (Gen. 1:28). And “the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.” (Gen. 2:19–20)

Be fruitful. Increase. Subdue. Rule. These are the fourfold actions of the creation mandate. Libraries (and museums and archives) are places that exemplify this mandate. In them are displayed humanity’s fruitfulness—its increase. Not to divert our attention to the writer in Ecclesiastes, but our “cultural institutions” exhibit the filling of the earth, the “no end” of intellectual production. Disciplines like library science emerged to foster the process of subduing through various organizational schema the mountains of resources (e.g., books) created by humanity. In 1876 enter Melvil Dewey (actually Melville, but Melvil was simpler; he founded the Spelling Reform Association). We all know Dewey for his creation of the noted classification system that sought to bring order through subject classification. This was one way that the created order was subdued, not unlike Adam’s naming each living creature.

Now the fourth element of our creation quadruplet is rule. If anything, libraries can be noted for their rules. In some ways, this is what attracts some of those who work in libraries—the structure, the organization. The defeat of chaos. Though some may chaff at the rules, it is the order, borne out of rules, that makes libraries useful. Finding balance in the tension is necessary as the organization of libraries, physical and digital, is what enables access to the information that helps individuals learn.

New Testament scholar Greg Beale has noted that “the cultural mandate is the first Great Commission.” The command found in Matthew’s gospel reveals elements of the creation quadruplet, particularly being fruitful and filling the earth. Libraries, museums, and archives help us understand the created order, whether it is the creation given to us by God or the one shaped and formed by humanity. As “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), we further express Beale’s “first Great Commission.” By engaging ideas and organizing information, libraries help us understand the creation, which helps us understand the Creator and enables us to tell his story, revealed in Christ.

David Malone, dean of college and seminary library

From the Center for Student Success

We offer sincere gratitude to all faculty members who have responded to our request for midterm feedback. We received a significant number of reports, for the students for whom we solicited feedback and for a good many students from the broader student body. Thank you! Our coordinated retention efforts cannot succeed without your partnership. And now, a follow-up request: if you learn during an academic advising meeting (or other conversation) that a student may be considering discontinuing from Calvin, could you please let us know? You can do so at the same [student concern form](#), by selecting “discontinuation” as the report reason.

From the Faculty Activity Reports

- Karin Maag (History), “No Better Songs: John Calvin and the Genevan Psalter in the Sixteenth Century and Today,” *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 68, no. 4 (2017): 28–33.
- Larry Molnar (Physics and Astronomy), “[The First Post-Kepler Brightness Dips of KIC 8462852](#),” *Astrophysical Journal Letters* 853, no. 1 (2018): L8.
- Corey Roberts (Germanic and Asian Languages), “From Aesthetic to Artistic Inspiration: Visual Arts as the Impetus for Poetic Creation in Goethe’s Early Writings “ (lecture, American Society of Eighteenth Century Studies, Orlando, FL, March 24, 2018).

Be sure to [fill out](#) your Faculty Activity Reports regularly. If you have questions, see the [FAQ page](#).

Coming Up on Campus (Check the [campus calendar](#) for a full list of events)

Monday, April 2

- Easter Monday; no classes or chapel
- Blood drive, 12:00 noon–7:00 p.m., Chapel Undercroft

Tuesday, April 3

- Chapel. Taizé with Karen Saupe and Debra Rienstra. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Physics seminar. Ryan Balili, “My Two-Level NV: Oh, the Things Diamond Can Do.” 3:45 p.m., SB 110
- Blood drive, 12:00 noon–7:00 p.m., Chapel Undercroft

Wednesday, April 4

- Chapel. Drum circle with Eric Nykamp. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Blood drive, 12:00 noon–7:00 p.m., Chapel Undercroft
- History colloquium. Robert Schoone-Jongen, “One Family, One Business, One Century: A Story of Braens and Stones.” 3:30 p.m., Meeter Center lecture hall

Thursday, April 5

- Chapel. Sounds of gospel worship with Nate Glasper Jr. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Blood drive, 12:00 noon–7:00 p.m., Chapel Undercroft
- Mathematics and Statistics colloquium. Katelyn Plaisier Leisman (U of Illinois). 3:40 p.m., NH 276
- Sexuality Series. Monica Daye, “#Metoo#inchurchtoo: Sexual Violence and How to Help Survivors.” 7:00 p.m., Chapel

Friday, April 6

- Chapel. Student worship team. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Biology seminar. Michael Kennedy (Northwestern U), “Science Club: Building Meaningful Relationships between Scientists and Community.” 1:30 p.m., SB 010
- Christian Perspectives in Science seminar. Paul Harper, Derek Schuurman, and Jim Bradley, “The Challenge of Transhumanism.” 3:30 p.m., SB 110