

# A Little Library History

Steve Jamieson · Buswell 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Chapel · January 28, 2026

Covenant's first librarian was Emily Russel, who was hired in 1957, one year after the founding of the seminary and two years after the founding of the college. That same year she co-founded the Christian Librarian's Fellowship, today known as the Association of Christian Librarians. When Covenant College moved to Lookout Mountain in 1964, she was responsible for dividing the library collection between the college and the seminary, though she opted to stay at the seminary.

By 1974, having been under the supervision of Professor David Jones and Librarian Joseph Hall, the seminary library held 25,000 volumes. Outgrowing its space on the first floor of the administrative building, the seminary board had made plans to build a dedicated library building as the first new construction on campus, dubbed "Project 75", referring to the year in which the library was to be completed. Although not dedicated until January 9, 1976, the library was indeed first opened in early December 1975 when a team of students, faculty, and staff together moved the entire book collection to the new building in one day. The library was named in honor of pastor and theologian J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., who had served as dean from 1956 to 1970.

Nearly twenty-five years later, the library needed to grow again. In the fall of 1999, the seminary broke ground on a major renovation and expansion, which would give the collection more room to grow, improve study space, add classrooms, and offer new faculty offices (now used by Counseling and IT). Library Director Jim Pakala oversaw the project alongside librarians Denise Pakala and Per Almquist. The project was completed in time for the Fall 2000 semester and dedicated in the spring of 2001.

The maximum capacity of the original Buswell library was said to have been 100,000 volumes. Today the collection has grown to nearly 105,000 physical items. The library also provides access to over 280,000 e-books, tens of thousands of online journals, and over 24 million titles from the collections of more than 70 libraries across Missouri and beyond through our partnership with MOBIUS. We also benefit from the presence of the PCA Historical Center within the library building, with its rich collections of Presbyterian history, and from the Mare Archaeology Institute's collection of materials on biblical archaeology, which are included in the library's catalog.

We thank God for the resources he has provided to help equip Covenant's students over the years and for the faithful servants he has called to steward these collections for future generations.