The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection was established in 1987, when Richard and Martha Kessler donated their private collection of 49 Reformation imprints and manuscripts to Emory University. These materials were combined with Reformation holdings at the Pitts Theology Library, and an effort was launched to enlarge and sustain this collection. In the years since, the collection has become one of America’s most important resources for scholarship on the Reformation, and it has proven to be a valuable asset to the church as it tells the story of the Christian faith.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was the pivotal religious movement in Western culture since the introduction of Christianity, and the purpose of the Kessler Collection has been to document that reformation in Germany. The collection has focused on the works of Martin Luther (1483-1546), his colleagues, and opponents that were published during their lifetimes. The aim has been to gather materials that would give historians and theologians the opportunity to hear the full range of voices that were raised in this dynamic period.

The holdings of the collection now approaches 3,500 items, a mark approximated by only two other libraries in North America (Harvard University and the Folger Shakespeare Library); no American library approaches the Kessler Collection’s 1,000 publications by Luther himself.

As the collection has grown over the past 22 years, it has stimulated musical programs, provided a venue for visiting lecturers, supported teaching and research, and supplied the grist for scholarly publications. In addition, it has provided the material for the creation of a digital archive of woodcuts and metal engravings, now accessible to all via the Pitts Theology Library homepage (click on the red Luther Rose at www.pitts.emory.edu) and is regularly the subject of presentations for students, church and synagogue groups, professional organizations, and visiting scholars. In short, the Kessler Collection has been a significant resource for the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and international scholarship and has become a point of intersection for the academy and the church.

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Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection

FACT SHEET

- **What:** The Kessler Reformation Collection includes almost 3,500 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts—all originals and most issued by 1570—that deal with the 16th century German Reformation. It is valued at over $5,000,000.

- **Where:** The Kessler Collection is part of the Pitts Theology Library (Candler School of Theology, Emory University), America’s third largest theological library, with more than 550,000 volumes, about 120,000 of which comprise its special collections.

- **Ranking:** Only two other American libraries have such strong holdings of original, printed materials dealing with the German Reformation (Harvard University and the Folger Shakespeare Library), and none approaches the Kessler Collection’s number of early printings of Luther’s works.

- **Highlights:**
  - About 1,000 works composed by Martin Luther, the first best-selling German author, including his enormously influential and very rare translation of the Greek New Testament into German (the *September Testament*, 1522)
  - Over 200 publications by Philipp Melanchthon, Luther’s great colleague and friend who was known as “the Teacher of Germany”
  - Eighty-six works by Erasmus, perhaps the greatest humanistic scholar of the 16th century, including the first three editions of his Greek *New Testament*
  - The first Lutheran hymnal (the *Achtliederbuch*, 1524) and book of worship (the *Deutsche Messe*, 1526), and several other early, very rare Lutheran hymnals and books that defined the practice of Lutheran worship in Germany
  - An unused indulgence (1515), 28 papal bulls, and many other works that track Luther’s conflicts with Rome
  - The first Latin and German editions of the monumental *Augsburg Confession*, which formulated Lutheran doctrine for the next half-millennium
  - Fifty-nine catechisms
  - The first four editions of the *Rabbinic Bible*, the second of which defined the text of the Hebrew Bible for scholars for the next 400 years

- **Internet Accessibility:** The Kessler Collection is included in the EUCLID catalog on the Pitts Library homepage ([http://www.pitts.emory.edu](http://www.pitts.emory.edu)), and the Digital Image Archive (click on the red Luther Rose on the Pitts homepage) offers access to 25,000 woodcuts/engravings (many by Lucas Cranach, the Elder, and other premiere German artists of the 16th century) at no charge for teaching and research.

- **October Program:** The 2009 *Reformation Day at Emory* will be the 22nd annual celebration of this program of music and lectures. It draws hundreds of attendees and is offered free of charge to the public. ([http://www.pitts.emory.edu/community/reformationday.cfm](http://www.pitts.emory.edu/community/reformationday.cfm))
Standing Advisory Committee
The Standing Advisory Committee for the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection serves to offer counsel on the development of the Collection and its programs. It meets at Emory University three times annually and includes the following members:
Mr. Richard C. Kessler, Chair
CEO, The Kessler Enterprise
Mr. Roy T. Wise, Secretary
Senior Vice President, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia, Retired
Ms. Mary Lou Greenwood Boice
Associate Dean of Development and External Relations, Candler School of Theology
Mr. Richard Lane Brown, III
Rev. Richard Campbell
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Bishop H. Julian Gordy
Bishop of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)
Dr. M. Patrick Graham
Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography & Director, Pitts Theology Library
Dr. Jan Love
Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics, Candler School of Theology
Mrs. Betty Mori
Mrs. Laura VanTil
The Kessler Enterprise

Scholars Advisory Committee
The Scholars Advisory Committee for the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection advises the director of the Pitts Library about acquisitions and includes the following persons:
Dr. Kurt K. Hendel
Bernard, Fischer and Westberg Distinguished Professor of Reformation Church History, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Dr. Scott Hendrix
James Hastings Nichols Professor of Reformation History and Doctrine, Princeton Theological Seminary
Dr. Robin A. Leaver
Professor of Sacred Music, Westminster Choir College, Rider University
Dr. Martin Treu
Director of the Lutherhalle-Wittenberg
Dr. Timothy J. Wengert
Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor, Reformation History, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia


**RICHARD C. KESSLER REFORMATION COLLECTION
COMMENTS**

Reformation "places" for observation and study used to be Wittenberg and Geneva, Cambridge and Rome, New Haven and St. Louis—but not Atlanta! Now Atlanta is very much "on the map," a place of pilgrimage for scholars, lovers of the art and music of the Reformation, admirers of historic books, thanks to the Kessler Collection. The initiative taken by a couple of lay people, now surrounded by an alert group of supporters, has attracted publics to special events and serious students of history, theology, hymnody, and 16th century culture. First those of us at a distance could not picture something like this collection growing at this place at this date in this culture—and now we cannot picture the culture being as rich and accessible as it is at Emory in Atlanta early in the third millennium.

*Martin E. Marty, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, The University of Chicago; Author of the Penguin Lives biography MARTIN LUTHER (2004).*

The Kessler Collection of Pitts Theology Library at Emory University is the best single source of early Protestant Reformation imprints in North America. Particularly important to me, as a legal historian, is the growing collection of early modern legal ordinances. The collection is a treasure for all of us at Emory University and for all of us who labor in Reformation and early modern history.

*John Witte, Jr., Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law; Director of Law and Religion Program; Director of Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion*

The Kessler Reformation Collection is not only a fine assembly of 16th-century imprints, but also a very vibrant and active player in the world of Reformation Studies. Pitts Theological Library has been aggressively collecting in this area for several years now and has put together an impressive number of works by Martin Luther and by his important colleague Philipp Melanchton, in particular. Moreover, the library brings the collection to life through exhibitions, concerts, symposia, publications, and even notecards! Reformation scholars traditionally look to Wolfenbüttel, Harvard, and maybe the Folger Library as places where they are likely to find what they need in the way of 16-century works, but Emory must now join the list.

*Valerie Hotchkiss, Director, Rare Book & Special Collections Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

The Kessler Collection has assembled in a relatively short time an amazing treasure of Reformation tracts and literature and has made these available to all through its unsurpassed digitization of Reformation woodcuts and its annual programs of music, lectures, and publications. As a teacher, I often send students interested in the "sights and sounds" of the Reformation, so to speak, to use these resources. As a scholar, I have benefited from the research supported by the library.

*Dr. Timothy J. Wengert, Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor, Reformation History, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia*