

**ACS INFORMATION FLUENCY PROJECT 2002**  
**A PROPOSAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH**

**Title**                Sewanee Theology and Religious Studies (STARS)

***Leaders/Contact Information***

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***Abstract***

As part of an overall effort to foster information fluency, the University of the South will undertake the development of a program to identify, describe, and train students in the use of electronic and audiovisual resources in theology and religious studies. This program, to be called *Sewanee Theology and Religious Studies* (STARS), will replace the present library orientation for the School of Theology and will introduce field-specific orientation to resources in religious studies for the Department of Religion in the College of Arts and Sciences. Creation of a STARS website is to be the primary outcome, together with the development of staff expertise in using the website as a teaching tool. This website will provide on-demand coaching to students (and secondarily to other library patrons interested in the subject area), tailored to the specific demands of courses being offered currently.

***Rationale***

Because the University of the South is the only ACS institution with a graduate school of theology, and because the University also has an undergraduate department of religion, Sewanee is a logical site for the development of a resource that will serve both undergraduates and graduate students. Such a project will enable us to achieve significant economy in development, and the resulting website will enable us to reduce

dependence on live staff involvement (whether librarians or classroom teachers) in basic resource instruction. Once developed, the website can be made available to other ACS institutions with less locally available expertise in religion than we have at Sewanee.

Internally, the STARS project will enable us to draw together students and faculty in both undergraduate and graduate programs as a development team with richer and more varied perspectives than either program could supply on its own. Our information resources personnel are well able to sustain this development effort with technical expertise and coordination with other projects going on in the University. In particular, the School of Theology is completing the first year of a program funded by the Lilly Endowment to enhance seminarians' ability to use information technology. The School's information technology director is paid from that grant. His experience on projects for Theology faculty will be useful to the STARS team. Likewise, the College's religion department has for some years been the locus of pioneering uses of technology in teaching. Putting these resources together will both strengthen our work at Sewanee and enable us to provide something more useful to the rest of ACS.

### ***Preliminary Description***

What we propose is to select a student-faculty team to work on this project in the summer of 2002. Preliminary meetings during the spring term will be used to develop strategy with faculty; then students will undertake the creation of a website with the project director's guidance. The first phase of the website would then be available for use in the fall term 2002, geared to the requirements of courses to be offered in that term.

The target audience is composed of both undergraduate and graduate students. Student workers on the STARS team will be pilot users; they will be an important source of advice about what will (and will not) work well with their peers. By working together in developing the STARS website, undergraduates and seminarians will also be able to help their respective faculties learn from each other and so enhance the overall teaching at Sewanee.

### ***Follow-up and Evaluation***

The first test of the new product will be in the fall term 2002. If students find the STARS website useful in completing assignments for courses, then the project will be a success. The deficiencies that students find, and their proposals for correcting those deficiencies or for other enhancements, will constitute the primary input for the second phase of website development. This will be an ongoing process for the foreseeable future. Successive summers, perhaps with some in-term development as well, will see the inclusion of better guides to more courses. Since the students themselves will be the primary consumers, they will tell us directly and immediately how well we are doing.

### ***Dissemination of Results***

The project director will report to ACS upon completion of the first semester's experience with the website, or at such other times as desired. The website itself can be made available in its first phase to faculty at other ACS institutions for their evaluation, which in turn will be input for the second phase of development.

### ***Suggestions for Replication***

We expect the website to provide a model, perhaps one among several, to be used on other campuses. Each institution or department, and to some extent each faculty member, will need to be able to adapt the website to local and personal requirements.

### ***Calendar***

Preliminary development: January-May 2002

Website development (phase 1): May-August 2002

Initial trial of phase 1: August-December 2002