

Kathryn E. Flynn. Locating the Research Methods of Doctoral Students: The Results of Interviews with Current Religious Studies Doctoral Students. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. July, 2017. 71 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell

This paper describes a study conducted to better understand both the ways in which current PhD students in religious studies gather research and which library resources they are using. PhD students provide invaluable insight regarding shifts in research, library science, and publishing, yet little research has been conducted with them in comparison to their more senior faculty-status colleagues. In order to correct that oversight, this study was designed in an effort to improve PhD student's instruction in the art of research and to improve library assistance with PhD student-specific research bottlenecks. This study used a semi-structured interview protocol to solicit the experiences of current religious studies doctoral students on the issue, seeking five, and garnering seven usable responses. Interview results indicate that in comparison to current religious studies faculty at the same institution, doctoral students are 1.) more comfortable identifying their work as data; 2.) incorporating more technology into their research methods and storage; and 3.) weighing in more heavily on the importance of public engagement. They do, however, still disagree amongst themselves on such issues as when to incorporate nontraditional publishing avenues into their portfolios. The results of this study are of primary interest to UNC University Libraries staff, academic library staff members in general through professional organizations, humanities faculty across the country, researchers studying trends in higher education, and by other PhD students.

Headings:

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LOCATING THE RESEARCH METHODS OF DOCTORAL STUDENTS:
THE RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH CURRENT RELIGIOUS
STUDIES DOCTORAL STUDENTS

by

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Echad.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries predate institutions of higher learning by a couple thousand years,¹ but within Western Europe at least, universities and the study of religion have nearly always been intertwined.² Granted, at this time, religious study essentially meant studying (Christian) theology as an extension of the classical seven liberal arts, which fueled all pedagogical study at that time:

The foundation of education was fairly simple. Everything rested on the seven liberal arts: the quadrivium (based on form) – mathematics, astronomy, geometry, and music – and the trivium (based on interpretation of form) – grammar, rhetoric, and logic. To these eventually were added specialized study, for instance in medicine, law, or theology.³

Within the United States today, thanks to a post-Enlightenment attempt at a robust “separation between Church and State,”⁴ one is unlikely to study theology in a public/non-religiously-affiliated school of higher learning. The term “theology” – or rather *θεολογία* (theologia) – originally encompassed “an account of the gods, or of God (whether legendary or philosophical).”⁵

¹ Budd, *The Changing Academic Library*, 65:15.

² Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 1:9.

³ Budd, *The Changing Academic Library*, 65:16.

⁴ Jefferson, “Jefferson’s Letter to the Danbury Baptists.”

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, “Theology.”

However, theology was not always so narrowly defined. In fact, “the very earliest work of self-styled ‘theology’ of which we have a few surviving fragments” comes from “the encyclopaedic pre-Christian survey of Roman paganism by Marcus Terentius Varro,” the Roman Stoic philosopher.⁶ However, thanks to the substantially larger publishing footprint of Augustine of Hippo, Tertullian, and Abelard (the group of whom’s collective publications begin in the late Patristic period and run through the Middle Ages), the definition of “theologia” evolved – first to describe the Christian Scriptures in of themselves and then to the “philosophical treatment of the doctrines of Christian tradition,”⁷ crystalizing into the academic discipline theologians practice today. The reason that this historical and semantic context matters is because the idea of theology is now irrevocably linked to not only Christianity, but to the *practice* thereof. This in turn means that the study of theology serves as the skeleton for the fleshed out body of Christian faith, formation, and engagement with the world. In order to study Christianity through the analytical lens of the non-practitioner – as well as to broaden the focus of such study to far beyond the constraints of Christianity – a new term and definition were needed. Max Müller, in 1882, the first ever professor of Comparative Religion at Oxford University writes:

Its title [Science of Religion], though implying as yet a promise rather than a fulfillment, has become more or less familiar in Germany, France, and America; its great problems have attracted the eyes of a many inquirers, and its results have been anticipated either with fear or with delight. It becomes therefore the duty of those who have devoted their life to the study of the principal religions of the world in their original documents, and who value religion and reverence it in whatever form it may present itself, to take possession of this new territory in the name of true science,

⁶ Shanks, *What Is Truth?*, 29.

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, “Theology.”

and thus to protect its sacred precincts from the inroads of those who think that they have the right to speak on the ancient religions of mankind...without ever taking the trouble of learning the languages in which their sacred books are written.”⁸

For Müller, religion is a matter of science, not practice. Moving forward, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter abbreviated as UNC) implemented its own Department of Religious Studies in 1946, although it still took decades to expand its focus beyond Christianity.⁹

If the study of religion is a science, then why is it so challenging to define it as the “the study of...?” The Academy is united behind the definitions of biology and even alchemy. But what is “religion?” While lecturing to students at the University of Edinburgh, noted philosopher and psychologist William James stated, “The very fact that they [religions] are so many and so different from one another is enough to prove that the word 'religion' cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name.”¹⁰ To further underscore James’ thesis regarding “religion’s” scattered ontology...within the United States, the only entity with the final authority to determine what is or is not a religion is the Internal Revenue Service,¹¹ not any religious leadership or body of academic scholarship. However, in order to better examine how the Department of Religious Studies at UNC specifically wrestles with their understanding of ‘religion,’ the author of this study here inserts the segment from the study performed this spring, *Supporting the Changing Research Practices of UNC-*

⁸ Müller, *Introduction To The Science Of Religion*, 26–27.

⁹ Department of Religious Studies, “About the Department.”

¹⁰ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 26.

¹¹ Internal Revenue Service, “Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations,” 2.

Chapel Hill's Religious Studies Faculty, in which various faculty members described their own understandings of the identity of their department and scholarly work vis-à-vis 'religion.'

The first critical piece of identity differentiation is between "religious studies" (understood as requiring a separation of self from subject) and any manifestation of "theology" (understood as a term tied to Christianity in particular) or project that promotes a particular faith or set of practices with the goal of improving said faith or practice in others (understood to apply to all religious traditions in general). As Interviewee Number Three said,

As a public university, UNC should not be in the position of supporting any particular religious position. In fact, there was opposition to establishing our department for a number of years on the fear that it might become a divinity school. In a sense, this department is almost, not quite, militantly anti-theological. We don't do theology from the inside. We do history, anthropology, literature of religion as a subject that needs to be investigated because of its importance in civilization.¹²

Similarly, a different faculty member said,

The kinds of questions that we're asking... We don't see ourselves as forwarding the agenda of any particular denomination. At the same time, I like to think that we're sympathetic to the endeavor of theology. Part of what we're studying is a kind of history of theology, albeit in a critical perspective – critical in the sense that we don't see the particular theological positions adopted by one reader of the Bible as truth in any absolute way, but rather as a part of the history of text that has a long, complex, varied history.¹³

Through both statements, one gains insight into the weight that the faculty members place on their objectivity as scholars through intentionally verbally removing themselves from any hint of religious affinity.

¹² Number Three, Religious Studies Interview Number Three, 1.

¹³ Number Six, Religious Studies Interview Number Six, 3.

The other piece of self-identification emerges through members of the department's further ambivalence and even distance regarding the word, "religion" itself. The word, "religion," is a derivation of Latin's *religio*, which means "conscientiousness, sense of right, moral obligation, duty."¹⁴ Historically, this Roman and then Christian definition has been projected onto communities and cultures across the globe – frequently at great cost to those groups. One professor described this Eurocentrism as,

A chunk of us struggle with the term 'religion' because it's homogenizing and reductive. It takes an incredible diversity of human practices, historical and contemporary, and it attaches them to a term which is very Western and monotheistic. The expectations of most people when they hear 'religion' – their expectation is connected to that term. A lot of us find that those expectations cloud, confound, or otherwise don't do justice to the practices that we're working in. So when I use that term with you, that's a shorthand. I like to use the word 'praise,' or 'practice.'¹⁵

A different professor adds, "The implicit model people have when they they think of religion comes from those religions [Judeo-Christian and Islam], and it doesn't work to think about in other places in the same way, because it brings those with it. I see that as an issue. I think there's a politic to the word religion."¹⁶ A third professor unveils a further dimension by bringing these divisions home,

What we do is politically a lightning rod. Even historically this department at UNC had some very interesting episodes in its past. On the one hand, there have always been a lot of constituents and politicians who think there's only one true religion – that's Christianity – and why are you teaching any of these other things as if they were on an equal footing to the true religion? On the other hand, inside the university there have always been people who say religion is nothing but superstition and we should never have a department of superstition, so why should we have a

¹⁴ Crane, "Religio."

¹⁵ Number Ten, Religious Studies Interview Number Ten, 1.

¹⁶ Number Fifteen, Religious Studies Interview Number Fifteen, 8.

department of religion? There's always a lot of political controversy about what we teach and how we teach it."¹⁷

Historical context drives these kinds of identification discussions because of the power dynamics at play, which have real-world ramifications...both for the professors and those they study. This in turn can make it challenging for the researcher to continue to perform their research objectively from a distance when after they familiarize themselves with a particular group, they feel pulled to use their clout to speak up for those with a minimized voice.

After concluding *Supporting the Changing Research Practices of UNC-Chapel Hill's Religious Studies Faculty*, this author had a good understanding of the study of religion from a historical point up to the present. Except, they also wanted to collect a barometric reading of where the study of religion is located in the present and will be in the future. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to better understand the ways in which current religious studies PhD students in this discipline gather research and in the process, learn how academic librarians may better support them. Furthermore, this author hypothesized that higher education is failing doctoral students by not including research-gathering instruction within its curricula. Past studies on the research habits of not only religious studies doctoral students but humanities graduate students is surprisingly scant.^{18 19}

¹⁷ Number Thirteen, Religious Studies Interview Number Thirteen, 7.

¹⁸ Barrett, "The Information-Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities."

¹⁹ Madden, "Information Behaviour of Humanities PhDs on an Information Literacy Course."

To address these research deficiencies, this author interviewed religious studies doctoral students in-person within the following categories: research identity, research methods, publishing practices, and the state of the field.

A review of the literature explains the need for a current assessment of the research behaviors of religious studies doctoral students, as articulated by working professionals in the field. It also includes an overview of three of the larger themes found across the publications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study is the epicenter of three different fields: religious study, graduate-level research (as an object itself of study within academia), and library science. Thus in order to broadly examine the current literature, the author of this study needed to think interdisciplinarily: ERIC; Education Full Text; Academic Search Premier; ATLA Religion Database; ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index; Library & Information Science Source; Library & Information Science Abstracts; Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text; and SCOPUS.

But when it came to keyword searching, the author encountered a parallel form of nomenclature quandary. Consequently, the author alternated between the following variables: “religion” vs “religious studies” vs “humanities” vs “social sciences;” “doctoral student” vs “graduate student” vs “PhD student;” and “research” vs “research behaviors” vs “information-seeking” vs “information-retrieval.”

Unsurprisingly, other authors had the same issue:

Doctoral students form an interesting group to study in that they share characteristics with both the larger group commonly referred to as “graduate students,” which groups Master and PhD students together, and the group of researchers (including post-doctoral fellows). The complexity of deciphering the information behaviors of doctoral students probably lies in the fact that they seem to have one foot in each camp. This ambiguity is reflected in the literature: some studies explore the information behavior of doctoral students as part of the graduate student

group; other studies look at doctoral students, post-docs, and faculty together.²⁰

The literature bears this out. The author of this paper located twenty-two relevant works. Seven studied “doctoral” or “PhD” students only,^{21 22 23 24 25 26 27} and seven studied graduate students as a whole (encompassing both doctoral and masters students).^{28 29 30 31 32 33 34} Those two categories alone represented sixty-four percent of this review. However, in addition, three studies studied masters students exclusively,^{35 36 37} two studied doctoral students and faculty members

²⁰ Spezi, “Is Information–Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010–2015),” 80.

²¹ Deem and Brehony, “Doctoral Students’ Access to Research Cultures — Are Some More Unequal Than Others?”

²² Fleming-May and Yuro, “From Student to Scholar.”

²³ Research Information Network, “The Role of Research Supervisors in Information Literacy.”

²⁴ Barnes and Randall, “Doctoral Student Satisfaction.”

²⁵ Madden, “Information Behaviour of Humanities PhDs on an Information Literacy Course.”

²⁶ Hsin, Cheng, and Tsai, “Searching and Sourcing Online Academic Literature: Comparisons of Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty in Education.”

²⁷ Spezi, “Is Information–Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010–2015).”

²⁸ Barrett, “The Information–Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities.”

²⁹ George et al., “Scholarly Use of Information: Graduate Students’ Information Seeking Behaviour.”

³⁰ Malliari, Korobili, and Zapounidou, “Exploring the Information Seeking Behavior of Greek Graduate Students.”

³¹ Gibbs et al., “Assessing the Research Needs of Graduate Students at Georgetown University.”

³² Catalano, “Patterns of Graduate Students’ Information Seeking Behavior.”

³³ Wu and Chen, “Graduate Students Appreciate Google Scholar, But Still Find Use for Libraries.”

³⁴ Kinsley et al., “Graduate Conversations.”

³⁵ Monroe-Gulick and Petr, “Incoming Graduate Students in the Social Sciences.”

³⁶ Wu and Chen, “How Graduate Students Perceive, Use, and Manage Electronic Resources.”

together,^{38 39} one studied faculty members only,⁴⁰ one studied graduate students and graduate program directors together,⁴¹ and one studied public school students in grades six through twelve.⁴²

This author could not find any literature on the specific discipline of religion/religious studies; subsequently, the author expanded the search in concentric circles. Only two of the twenty-two studies focused exclusively on the humanities,^{43 44} and one of them specifically examined doctoral students.⁴⁵ Four studies worked exclusively on the social sciences,^{46 47 48 49} and two studied both.⁵⁰ ⁵¹ Two studies examined students within the realm of information and library science.^{52 53} One studied school-aged children in grades six through twelve.⁵⁴ In contrast to all of these small numbers, eleven studies – fifty percent – of the

³⁷ Lopatovska and Sessions, "Understanding Academic Reading in the Context of Information-Seeking."

³⁸ Ge, "Information-Seeking Behavior in the Digital Age."

³⁹ Larivière, Sugimoto, and Bergeron, "In Their Own Image?"

⁴⁰ Sugimoto, "Mentoring, Collaboration, and Interdisciplinarity."

⁴¹ Fong et al., "Assessing and Serving the Workshop Needs of Graduate Students."

⁴² Kuhlthau, Heinström, and Todd, "The 'Information Search Process' Revisited."

⁴³ Barrett, "The Information-Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities."

⁴⁴ Madden, "Information Behaviour of Humanities PhDs on an Information Literacy Course."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Deem and Brehony, "Doctoral Students' Access to Research Cultures — Are Some More Unequal Than Others?"

⁴⁷ Fleming-May and Yuro, "From Student to Scholar."

⁴⁸ Monroe-Gulick and Petr, "Incoming Graduate Students in the Social Sciences."

⁴⁹ Hsin, Cheng, and Tsai, "Searching and Sourcing Online Academic Literature: Comparisons of Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty in Education."

⁵⁰ Ge, "Information-Seeking Behavior in the Digital Age."

⁵¹ Kinsley et al., "Graduate Conversations."

⁵² Sugimoto, "Mentoring, Collaboration, and Interdisciplinarity."

⁵³ Lopatovska and Sessions, "Understanding Academic Reading in the Context of Information-Seeking."

⁵⁴ Kuhlthau, Heinström, and Todd, "The 'Information Search Process' Revisited."

studies encompassed the majority (or all) of the academic disciplines at graduate and post-graduate levels.^{55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65} In addition to the limited number of papers that thematically tie in to the focus of this study, many of the articles compiled for this literature review are limited in scope. Only ten papers examined members of the Academy located within the United States.^{66 67 68 69 70 71}

^{72 73 74 75} Three papers' participants included both Americans and foreign

⁵⁵ George et al., "Scholarly Use of Information: Graduate Students' Information Seeking Behaviour."

⁵⁶ Malliari, Korobili, and Zapounidou, "Exploring the Information Seeking Behavior of Greek Graduate Students."

⁵⁷ Research Information Network, "The Role of Research Supervisors in Information Literacy."

⁵⁸ Barnes and Randall, "Doctoral Student Satisfaction."

⁵⁹ Gibbs et al., "Assessing the Research Needs of Graduate Students at Georgetown University."

⁶⁰ Wu and Chen, "How Graduate Students Perceive, Use, and Manage Electronic Resources."

⁶¹ Catalano, "Patterns of Graduate Students' Information Seeking Behavior."

⁶² Larivière, Sugimoto, and Bergeron, "In Their Own Image?"

⁶³ Wu and Chen, "Graduate Students Appreciate Google Scholar, But Still Find Use for Libraries."

⁶⁴ Fong et al., "Assessing and Serving the Workshop Needs of Graduate Students."

⁶⁵ Spezi, "Is Information-Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010-2015)."

⁶⁶ George et al., "Scholarly Use of Information: Graduate Students' Information Seeking Behaviour."

⁶⁷ Kuhlthau, Heinström, and Todd, "The 'Information Search Process' Revisited."

⁶⁸ Fleming-May and Yuro, "From Student to Scholar."

⁶⁹ Ge, "Information-Seeking Behavior in the Digital Age."

⁷⁰ Barnes and Randall, "Doctoral Student Satisfaction."

⁷¹ Monroe-Gulick and Petr, "Incoming Graduate Students in the Social Sciences."

⁷² Gibbs et al., "Assessing the Research Needs of Graduate Students at Georgetown University."

⁷³ Kinsley et al., "Graduate Conversations."

⁷⁴ Fong et al., "Assessing and Serving the Workshop Needs of Graduate Students."

⁷⁵ Lopatovska and Sessions, "Understanding Academic Reading in the Context of Information-Seeking."

nationals.^{76 77 78} Nine papers did not explore American researchers at all.^{79 80 81 82}
^{83 84 85 86 87} Moreover, as the author of one of the papers used in this review said,
 “Although we did not restrict our research to empirical articles, it is interesting to
 note that the studies we retrieved were mostly small case studies at a given
 institution. Only a very few large-scale studies were identified; this may have
 implications on the ability to isolate trends.”⁸⁸ Of the twenty-two papers cited in
 this review, only six gathered/used data from multiple institutions for their
 theses,^{89 90 91 92 93 94} and only one conducted a study on a large and multi-

⁷⁶ Sugimoto, “Mentoring, Collaboration, and Interdisciplinarity.”

⁷⁷ Catalano, “Patterns of Graduate Students’ Information Seeking Behavior.”

⁷⁸ Spezi, “Is Information–Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010–2015).”

⁷⁹ Deem and Brehony, “Doctoral Students’ Access to Research Cultures — Are Some More Unequal Than Others?”

⁸⁰ Barrett, “The Information–Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities.”

⁸¹ Malliari, Korobili, and Zapounidou, “Exploring the Information Seeking Behavior of Greek Graduate Students.”

⁸² Research Information Network, “The Role of Research Supervisors in Information Literacy.”

⁸³ Wu and Chen, “How Graduate Students Perceive, Use, and Manage Electronic Resources.”

⁸⁴ Larivière, Sugimoto, and Bergeron, “In Their Own Image?”

⁸⁵ Madden, “Information Behaviour of Humanities PhDs on an Information Literacy Course.”

⁸⁶ Wu and Chen, “Graduate Students Appreciate Google Scholar, But Still Find Use for Libraries.”

⁸⁷ Hsin, Cheng, and Tsai, “Searching and Sourcing Online Academic Literature: Comparisons of Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty in Education.”

⁸⁸ Spezi, “Is Information–Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010–2015),” 80.

⁸⁹ Sugimoto, “Mentoring, Collaboration, and Interdisciplinarity.”

⁹⁰ Research Information Network, “The Role of Research Supervisors in Information Literacy.”

⁹¹ Barnes and Randall, “Doctoral Student Satisfaction.”

⁹² Catalano, “Patterns of Graduate Students’ Information Seeking Behavior.”

⁹³ Larivière, Sugimoto, and Bergeron, “In Their Own Image?”

directional scale within the institution itself.⁹⁵ Given the plentiful space for more research to be done on the particularity of graduate student information-seeking, this author's research will add to important data to this sphere of academic conversation.

In the course of reading all of this literature, three themes stood out: 1.) "Good" advisors make or break graduate students' success; 2.) Timing on the librarian's part in regards to where the student is on their track strongly affects their success rate; and 3.) The value in harnessing the library's strengths as a physical space.

Back in 2006, George et al. noted "Nearly all graduate students (96%) reported that academic staff (e.g., advisers, professors and committee members) influence their research and information seeking. This is consistent across the disciplines (86% in computer sciences to [95% for humanities to] 100% in business/policy, engineering and sciences)."⁹⁶ Six years later Monroe-Gulick & Petr observed,

One of the most significant and applicable findings was that the faculty were often the source of information regarding library research, directing students to appropriate databases and suggesting other information sources...Students in this study learned, or at least remembered, specific resources suggested by their faculty more than those suggested by librarians. This reinforces the important role of faculty in teaching not just about subject content and the research process, but also identifying appropriate library resources.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Spezi, "Is Information-Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010-2015)."

⁹⁵ Kinsley et al., "Graduate Conversations."

⁹⁶ George et al., "Scholarly Use of Information: Graduate Students' Information Seeking Behaviour," 5.

⁹⁷ Monroe-Gulick and Petr, "Incoming Graduate Students in the Social Sciences," 327.

A decade after George et al. published their statistics, Hsin, Cheng, & Tsai found,

Unlike the junior faculty who requested literature from their peers and colleagues, the doctoral students relied heavily on their advisors for selecting keywords, evaluating the appropriateness of articles, and recommending articles... [revealing] that novice researchers still need their advisors' scaffolds and guidance in the process of mastering skills for retrieving relevant academic literature.⁹⁸

If the supervisor/advisor does their job “well,” then the student will succeed, but if they do not, then the student will not. Success here referring not just to the acquisition of the degree, but also to research performance as faculty members themselves...remembering also that these new faculty members will in turn advise the next generation and so on. But what is “wellness?” Researchers in Great Britain wrote at great length about all of the different ways in which students understood their supervisor’s role – and in different ways from how the supervisors themselves saw their role. The British researchers highlighted the need for external structure at the outset to secure good communication, not just for the mentor-mentee relationship but also for the department relationship with the faculty members serving as advisors at any given time.⁹⁹ The trouble with establishing expectations right at the beginning before a relationship has developed is that it requires vulnerability. If the advisor comes in to the relationship expecting the student to already have solid research skills, then, as Spezi points out:

Supervisors provide minimal support to doctoral students in helping them acquire the rudiments and basics required to start their information

⁹⁸ Hsin, Cheng, and Tsai, “Searching and Sourcing Online Academic Literature: Comparisons of Doctoral Students and Junior Faculty in Education,” 994–95.

⁹⁹ Research Information Network, “The Role of Research Supervisors in Information Literacy.”

search journey at doctoral level...Students find it difficult to ask for assistance for fear of showing important gaps in their skills and knowledge and potentially risk losing their supervisors' trust and interest.¹⁰⁰

Consequently, students reach out to more senior classmates and potentially miss out on a bonanza of research experience borne out of years of work.

For academic librarians to succeed with graduate students, they must give greater attention to when they intervene. Timeliness refers both to the chronology within a given school year and to how far many years the student has experienced in graduate school. Regarding the first form of time, Gibbs,

Boettcher, Hollingsworth, & Slania reported:

There was general agreement that the one-shot library orientations for grad students (organized in conjunction with the departments, usually in the fall) are insufficient in making students aware of services and specialized resources available to them. Many students either miss the orientation or don't retain much from it, as this humanities Ph.D. student shared in her focus group: "I don't remember anything that happened the first week, really." Students felt they would benefit more from instruction at the point of need, "once you're in your subject" and when students are working on their papers. One humanities focus group participant remarked that she learned the most about library research tools when she audited an undergraduate class that came to the library for research instruction. Another humanities focus group participant wished there were more resources for the new student. A Master's social sciences student echoed this need for research basics: "There should have been a systematic training on thesis writing, the different formatting styles, how to start writing a paper, how to start research, and what references are needed."¹⁰¹

The trick for librarians, however, is how to lay the right amount of subliminal ideation out at the outset, so that when a student hits a snag, the snag activates the ideation which in turn propels them towards the library. In other words, as

¹⁰⁰ Spezi, "Is Information-Seeking Behavior of Doctoral Students Changing?: A Review of the Literature (2010-2015)," 99.

¹⁰¹ Gibbs et al., "Assessing the Research Needs of Graduate Students at Georgetown University," 272.

inefficient as a workshop/lecture during orientation is, there is also a *reason* why librarians continue to use it. In considering other options, one should examine Madden's findings in the wake of teaching an information literacy course/module aimed at humanities doctoral students. He discovered that

When asked to comment on the timing of the module, all 20 respondents indicated that first year is an appropriate time to attend the course; six mentioned that a flexible approach, with the option of both a block delivery and workshops, was suitable.¹⁰²... [An] interviewee suggested: "The timing is always different for different people isn't it? Even now if you offered me the whole module again I'd probably go"¹⁰³... The "haphazard" nature of the initial research stages may mean that some will wish to revisit particular units later. If the research process is an iterative one, aspects of the module may be appropriate for some researchers at a later point, however, the participants clearly valued the awareness of resources early on. Once they are aware of the information, they can then attempt to understand how this fits within the evolving needs of their own research, helping them to make sense of their situation¹⁰⁴... It is important to let PhD students know that they are welcome to attend workshops again as refreshers.¹⁰⁵

The critical component to Madden's commentary is that doctoral students are not in stasis for the duration of their program. The same material will resonate with a third year in a way that is decidedly different from a first year, and so on. After studying the information-seeking habits of humanities graduate students, Barrett made sure to articulate a more nuanced vision of graduate students' experience moving through their programs:

It is, however, potentially misleading to consider graduate students to be a single unique user group. Rather, a more accurate depiction would be a group constituting a unique series of stages. For example, a first year masters student may initially appear to have little in common with a PhD

¹⁰² Madden, "Information Behaviour of Humanities PhDs on an Information Literacy Course," 99.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 102-3.

candidate preparing for defense. However, both students do appear to follow fairly predictable patterns as they progress through established stages of their programs. One such stage is the so called “ABD” (all but dissertation) phase of the PhD program. Participants who have been through this stage all spoke of it as a unique period in their graduate careers, where an important transition takes place as students shift from coursework and comprehensive examinations towards concentration on their own major research projects.¹⁰⁶

And so between these three papers, one can see the challenge for librarians: to consistently intersect with their students at the best learning-moment for the students at any given moment...while simultaneously tweaking the content of the modules because just as the students are not in stasis, neither is the rest of the world. Even though they will not always get it right, it is attempting to meet this challenge that will generate success – and any hope of professional sustainability.

As much work as academic librarians invest into their departments, they still must also give thought to their home base: the very physical library building. Just five years ago, at Georgetown University, Gibbs et al. reported:

The one unifying characteristic of all survey respondents and focus group participants was considerable dissatisfaction with the library's facilities: inadequate and poorly located space set aside for grad students (right under the library's café with its “horribly loud music” and directly above the library's sometimes noisy loading dock); uncomfortable furniture; inadequate lighting; not enough carrels, computers, whiteboards, or outlets; poor temperature control; and noise and competition for space from undergraduates...Some survey respondents complained that “quiet study spaces [are] overrun by undergraduates who are not observing the library rules, particularly in study rooms devoted to graduate study, or in ‘quiet areas’ near doctoral student carrels.” One survey respondent said, “I get my materials as fast as possible and leave.” One captured his low expectations with “I just resign myself to taking whatever space I can find.”...Focus group participants mentioned “sneaking” into other facilities on campus not meant for Graduate School students, such as the law, medical and bioethics libraries, or the business school's “bazillion-dollar

¹⁰⁶ Barrett, “The Information-Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities,” 330.

beautiful new glass building” where more spacious, flexible spaces enhance productivity and quiet study. Most recognized that hopes for a new building were unrealistic in the short term and wished instead for a “facilities facelift” that would accommodate two kinds of grad student—only spaces: one that allowed quiet reflection and writing (“private space of my own to work in”) and another that supported teamwork: “a place where you can gather, talk, eat, whatever. And spend more time. From what I’ve seen in other libraries at other universities, you find those kinds of places.”¹⁰⁷

From the above, one can see that the desire on the part of graduate students to use the library’s physical space is there; it just runs aground upon structural problems. On a related note, “Washington-Hoagland and Clougherty (2002) reported that 66 percent of students use public service desks (e.g. for circulation of books) although they rarely use reference consultation services...Students did not want to appear inept (Sadler and Given, 2007).”¹⁰⁸ As with the dreary facilities at Georgetown, the layout of libraries (and particularly their service desks) impedes graduate students’ usage. Here the problem is the graduate students feel as though they are on public display when asking their questions; therefore, they take their questions to safer venues: friends and members of their academic cohort. The good news is that libraries have leverage if they choose to use it. Kinsley et al. highlight:

Departments are at the center of graduate students’ experiences. They are places where students do their work as well as receive and share information about campus resources. The availability and quality of departmental work spaces provided for graduate students varied tremendously...While these spaces can create community, the students interviewed indicated that these communal spaces can also foster distractions...In cases where department spaces are inconsistent or

¹⁰⁷ Gibbs et al., “Assessing the Research Needs of Graduate Students at Georgetown University,” 271–72.

¹⁰⁸ Catalano, “Patterns of Graduate Students’ Information Seeking Behavior,” 263–64.

inadequate, the findings show that graduate students often turn to the library to fill the gap. Some graduate students referred to the library as a “second home” after their home department. Even students who were happy with their department spaces reported coming to the library for a change of pace, to meet with a group, or to access materials. For those without a department office, library spaces played an even more central role.¹⁰⁹

While the above study goes into great length regarding what graduate students are hungering for, the key points are “space for study and research that is limited to graduate students”¹¹⁰ combined with a “need to expand these spaces. The data indicate a desire for additional weekend hours, space to spread out while working, a variety of comfortable furniture, and storage space” and for a remedy regarding “the barrier posed by limited parking near the libraries.”¹¹¹ Studies like Kinsley et al.’s remind librarians that there are concrete ways to simultaneously pull graduate students toward library spaces *and* sow goodwill amongst people who will be tomorrow’s faculty members.

¹⁰⁹ Kinsley et al., “Graduate Conversations,” 761.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 765.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 768.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Method

This study focused on the experiences and opinions of an attempted representational sample of the whole population of religious studies doctoral students at UNC. Since it was intended as a partner to the study, *Supporting the Changing Research Practices of UNC-Chapel Hill's Religious Studies Faculty*, which used a semi-structured interview format, the author used that same format as well. The author used the earlier set of interview questions (created by the research entity Ithaka S+R) as the skeleton for their own interview protocol but tweaked it – in order to compensate for the necessary different academic vocational point for students when compared to faculty, to permit the author to attempt to identify the pedagogical source for the students' chosen research methods, and to pursue a closer reading of the forms of software adopted by current doctoral students. The interview protocol is included at the end of this paper in Appendix A.

The author moreover chose the interview method in order to best amass the kind of rapport that would permit follow-up questions to clarify and deepen a student's answer. In fact, in all interviews but one, the sessions ran over the intended time window due to the student's excitement around their project and the robustness of the conversation.

As the interview was performed in person, one-on-one, and at close range, it also allowed the author to informally assess the student's body language for their current comfort level as a research subject.

Sampling and Recruitment

The author studied the current population of doctoral students within the academic discipline of religious studies at the University of North Carolina. In order to complete the study within a narrow time window, and also collect the maximum amount of data, the author hoped to get a minimum of five interviews, and a maximum of ten. In considering how to recruit interview subjects, the author utilized an already established professional relationship with the departmental chair...a carryover from the prior study. This faculty member alerted the author to the existence of the Graduate Student Committee (GSC), an organization within the department, and represented by two doctoral students. The same professor introduced the three of us by email. In a separate email exchange between the two committee representatives, I explained my project and what I was looking for. They were happy to help, and they agreed to forward my recruitment email to the internal graduate student listserv for the department.

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) cleared me to proceed, through a further email exchange I asked the two GSC representatives to pass on the following: my IRB approval, my recruitment letter as an attachment (enclosed below in Appendix B), my email address, and my request that prospective subjects email me both their area of study and their year in school. Thanks to a Carnegie research grant through the School of Information and Library Science, I

was able to offer the promise of a \$30 electronic Amazon gift card upon completion of an interview, which I also asked the Graduate Student Members to pass along. The author initially had one response to my recruitment, and the voluntary participation of a doctoral student whom I knew from a previous collegial setting. The author emailed the student representatives again a couple weeks later to resend my request, but did not hear back. The author waited another week or so, and asked again. This time there was a flood of responses within a very short amount of time, suggesting that perhaps there had been some sort of technological email glitch during the previous recruitment attempts. Seven PhD students were selected to participate.

The interview protocol progressed in order through a series of categories: confirmation that the individual was of their majority, their academic background identity, their research focus, their research methods, their (most likely prospective) publishing practices, and their assessment of the state of their field...both now and looking forward. The question set was designed to parallel the actual research path and to cultivate a holistic recapitulation of a doctoral student's process. In sum, there were eighteen open-ended questions – the last of which was an invitation to the student to add any additional information they felt relevant that had not already been aired through one of the previous question.

Data Analysis

As there were a small number of subjects with mostly qualitative data, the author opted to not use statistical software. Instead, the author coded and analyzed the data via content analysis.

Ethical Considerations

In working with living human subjects, a number of ethical issues arise.

The most primary of these issues is maintaining the subjects' confidentiality and anonymity. Interview sessions were recorded with a digital audio recorder in order to ensure the most accurate study results. The audio records were then downloaded to a password-protected external hard drive. All of the students' recordings, transcriptions, codes, and resulting data were stored on the same hard drive, in their own password-protected folder, and all students' names were replaced by a number. The second ethical issue was ensuring informed and voluntary consent. All subjects were required to be of an age to give legal consent at the time of the interview. Additionally, all subjects were asked to read and sign a voluntary consent form (enclosed in Appendix C) laying out the context of the experiment, the procedure, and their rights. Such rights included notification that the student could skip any question during the interview as well as leave at any time, without losing the promised appreciation gift. The consent form also stated that the research project the students were engaging in had been examined and approved by the IRB of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with instructions for contacting them anonymously if the subject so wished. At the completion of an interview, the consent letter was scanned and saved to the same password-protected hard drive, and the paper consent forms were shredded. At the conclusion of this study, all data components will be shredded or deleted.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Research Identity

In interviewing the seven doctoral students, I unexpectedly found that categorizing the students' research identity was challenging. On the one hand, UNC needs subsections within its religious Studies department for dissertational tracks. Using the UNC-assigned subsections, between the seven students, there are two in Islamic Studies, three in Ancient Mediterranean Religions, one in Religions of Asia, and one in Religions in the Americas. However, the students themselves feel a far greater degree of fluidity about where their research rests within the realm of religious studies, extending to their orientation within the larger Academy. For instance, one student describes their work as "Slaughterhouses...trying to lay a groundwork for some kind of engagement with the kind of navigations of life and death, and animal and human...that's happening that are super religiously charged."¹¹² Which religion could the rituals of slaughter apply to? Is there one when no deity is named? At the same time, a student working on the former Ottoman Empire – which the reader must remember is itself located in a geographical space that people struggle to name with consistency – could work in any number of academic departments besides religious studies,

¹¹² DS Number Three, Doctoral Student Interview Number Three, 1–2.

depending upon what professorship is available on the job market: Islamic Studies, History, Turkish Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Global Studies, Asian Studies, Philology,¹¹³ and perhaps more. Summing up both the inter and intra-disciplinary nature of religious studies, a third student says,

I see religious studies as a highly interdisciplinary. It's more of a hub for lots of theoretical and methodological and other disciplinary elements to kind of come and sort of bounce off into other areas. I mean if you think about what religion actually is, it's almost impossible to define. You know, it's sort of like pornography - you know it when you see it, but you're not even sure sometimes whether that qualifies, right?¹¹⁴

And it may turn out that it is the very slipperiness of the nature of religious studies that best prepares students to practice their craft successfully in any number of academic settings.

A second layer to the challenge was the need to be mindful of my small sample-size. Of the seven students, I had three 3rd years, two 4th years, one 6th year, and one 9th year. It would be tempting to project the needs and behaviors of the 3rd and 4th year students onto doctoral students as a whole, when in fact those needs and behaviors are wider and more nuanced in scope.

Research Methods

The first interviewee's method of gathering research is curating the collection of physical materials – such as photographs, pieces of artwork, folio-sized books, and DVDs – which were donated to them while they were doing field work. For this interviewee, the curation is a necessary process primarily due to limited space to store them. The interviewee credits the works they have read, the

¹¹³ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 1.

¹¹⁴ DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 2.

conferences they have attended, and the work they have done in an art museum as the vehicles for instruction on how to carry out this weeding process.

The second interviewee's research method spans two very different fields. On the first hand, the interviewee spends a great deal of time in the library and with books in general. The interviewee sees their text analysis as a necessary preparatory step to excavation: establishing context for the site both in its own right and regarding the site's previous excavators. Therefore, on the first hand, the student is engaged with classic texted-based research. The second hand, however, is wholly in the realm of the digital:

Photogrammetry is using pictures to reproduce measurable data in three-dimensions. And so I can have an object in front of me, take a series of photos around it, plug it into the software like I do soft photo scan, and it will give me a model...And there are tons of parameters that you can set. You can integrate Python scripting to tweak things further.¹¹⁵

The student explained that the value of 3-D reproduction is

Virtual reality implementation so people can go in and step inside of what an excavation looked like on a specific day [especially since] we might be reburying at the end of the season. I could rely on the two-dimensional photos that our photographer takes, or I can make a model of it, and next year when I excavate that area right next to it – and I can't remember exactly how these two relate because there's not a great photo of it – the 3D model, you can spin it in whatever direction you want and have it.¹¹⁶

In addition to aiding professional archaeologists, the interviewee also values the 3-D technology for its applicability in educating children about the field of archaeology in the first place. As an example, they shared,

We've printed a number of artifacts found in North Carolina, so projectile points like arrowheads and things like that. And whenever we go out on

¹¹⁵ DS Number Two, Doctoral Student Interview Number Two, 9–10.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

like science expose or archeology day, we actually have reproductions of artifacts that we can pass around, because if there are things that are fragile, we don't want kids to handle, we can actually engage with the public by saying, 'Well, this is what it actually looks like.' So it's not just a picture on a page anymore, but something that you can hold and you can feel."¹¹⁷

The interviewee learned about photogrammetry through a visiting scholar, who gave a workshop on PhotoScan, a particular photogrammetry software. From there, the interviewee taught themselves: UNC Libraries' subscription to Lynda.com, YouTube videos, and hands-on work in one of UNC's MakerSpaces.

The third interviewee has not begun their research yet, but anticipates returning to the journalistic technique of

Going through archives, interviewing lawyers, going to the court libraries and, you know, leafing through these huge binders of documents to see if there's any one sentence that's relevant. That kind of potpourri of source work I found really effective, especially in dealing with something like a new religious movement where the secondary resources are going to be nonexistent, pretty much.¹¹⁸

In describing how they learned to employ this time of research-gathering, the interviewee said "I think I just taught myself, yeah. Honestly, I think the only way I was taught to do that was by being taught to be a close reader," but then backpedaled to say, "but maybe that's just my memory like wanting to blur out and wanting to think that these skills are just innate. I'm sure there were a lot of corrections along the way."¹¹⁹ Regardless, clearly no particular person or instruction stands out.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ DS Number Three, Doctoral Student Interview Number Three, 4.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

The fourth interviewee would like to interview their research subjects, but has not been able to do so as yet...due to financial limitations resulting from the fact that the subjects are multiple continents away. In the meantime, the student is using the archives at both UNC and Duke University to establish historical context.¹²⁰ Regarding how they learned to do their research, the interviewee said,

So I was lucky that both in my master's program and, actually, even going all the way back to undergrad...if you thought you were going into a future of research or doing any kind of further education, you could apply for a program that meant you stayed on campus for the summer. You did a research project; usually direct, hands on; with your advisor. Since they're not teaching any classes, they could actually focus on your project, guiding you through things. So I did a summer project on Chinese religion, actually. I was interested in Japanese religion back then. My advisor studied China, however. Projects shift. But it was still a really good experience in that basically I did a – as weird as it sounds – nine to five for eight weeks in which I would meet with my professor in the morning. We would discuss goals. He would give me some strategies, some ideas – maybe you should look into this kind of book; maybe you should go through JSTOR and try to find these kinds of articles. He'd set me loose. I'd do my work, and sometimes at the end of the day, we'd meet again to go over what we accomplished. Sometimes that waited until the next morning's meeting where we'd also discuss how we could then try to fit these things together, how we could put them into an actual coherent narrative rather than just, here's a lot of neat things I found. That was invaluable. That was great. I had – obviously, not as long-term or as hands on, but – in my master's program, the advantage: They made all of us in our first semester do, basically, a research methodology, one-credit course, on top of our normal coursework. We would, once a week, meet at the library, speak with subject librarians in the fields we worked on; and get familiarized with all the different materials. It also meant that, by the time I was writing my thesis, I already knew the subject librarians who worked on Japanese history, on religious studies, and didn't feel so awkward going up to them and being like, 'hey, hate to bother you; but I would really like if we could order these five books, and if you could maybe call in these; and, do you have any suggestions of what else I could do...' ¹²¹

¹²⁰ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 6.

¹²¹ Ibid., 11.

This interviewee benefitted from intentional instruction on research methods at both the undergraduate and graduate level, the only one to have done so.

The fifth interviewee relies on essentially the classic form of textual criticism as their research method, but had never thought about it “in terms of a categorical process.”¹²² To practice their form of text criticism, they describe it as “starting broad and checking out 20 books and going through all their footnotes and going through bibliographies and just mining as much as I can.”¹²³ To get them started, they either network (if they know someone who has written/spoken on this topic) or “it’s going to the Gale Reference Library or some other trusted encyclopedia, ‘Encyclopedia of Religion’ or ‘Encyclopedia of Early Christian History’ or something that can at least point me to the first five or six resources.”¹²⁴ Beyond that, if they are examining a particular text, they collect the series of manuscripts that printed that particular phrasing to trace its transmission over time. In order to that, they use primarily physical objects: Tischendorf, Nestle-Aland, Biblia Patristica (in the library’s collection), but also two online materials: the University of Münster’s Institute for New Testament Textual Research, and the ATLA Research Database. The interviewee said

It’s a little haphazard. I wish I sounded more systematic, but it’s not...This was not given to me. This is more just what I found that sort of works. But I’m always sort of hungering for ... I mean if people have tips or resources or ways to sharpen things, I’m always all ears because I’m not married to the process... I mean I would say I’ve got ... no, I don’t think I’ve had much sort of formal people giving me advice. I mean here and there ... like someone once at one point pointed me to Biblia Patristica when I was a master’s student. I had no idea that that existed – so people pointing me to ... Biblia Patristica exists. Or at some point someone must have pointed me

¹²² DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 4.

¹²³ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

to ATLA as this database that you can ... but I don't think there was ever formal moment where people were like, 'Look, broad resources, narrow ... this is the sort of ecosystem that you have that you can sort of walk around in.'¹²⁵

Through these statements the interviewee suggests dissatisfaction with the research method they fell into. However, the interviewee then goes on at great length to describe their advisor's advice for practicing textual criticism, which essentially boiled down to the importance of humility in approaching these texts:

You're never too learned to not consult the encyclopedia first ... and look, some of the guys who are writing these things, some of the guys and gals writing this stuff, these people have dedicated fifty or sixty years, and they're worth reading. Someone put work and time into this, and you're never too smart to go back and consult another person who is also very, very smart and see if you've missed anything. See if they caught something that you didn't. You can always challenge it.¹²⁶

An observer could interpret the advisor's words as research guidance, but the interviewee did not – presumably because they envision research instruction differently – a possible future follow-up question.

The sixth interviewee said,

So I do mostly archival and kind of literary studies...mostly library materials in places like Turkey or Egypt or, you know, archives in the U.K. or Europe; printed materials mostly, few manuscripts, most all of that in Turkish, a little bit in Arabic, and then occasional things in French, and then some secondary source is in English. But primarily archival, primarily printed, early 20th century material.¹²⁷

The student expanded on that to explain that while UNC and Duke libraries between them have a sizable Persian and Arabic collection, they do not have a

¹²⁵ Ibid., 6–7.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁷ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 3.

robust Turkish collection. This in turn is why they depend upon inter-library loan, WorldCat, and grant money to travel to Turkey for its archives. When asked about digital materials, the interviewee shared that his experience has been hit-or-miss as to whether the material has been made available online, if HathiTrust allows access, if the material is there but incomplete, and if it has been catalogued sufficiently to be located. When asked how he learned to do all of this, they said,

Definitely trial and error. I mean it was kind of, “Well, I don't know what archival work looks like. Let me go to an archive.” And then friends would be like, “This is how you request a book,” you know. And so it took a lot of that and just me searching through the library randomly to figure out how to access materials. I’ve attended a couple of library sessions, for instance, for classes that I might be a graduate research consultant or a TA for. I’ve sat in with the Islamic studies librarian and learned ways to make my searching more efficient, but I didn’t know that I had figured out how to do but didn’t know how to do it in quite that organized manner, right? Searching, you know, by subject title, and then kind of searching within search material...Which I didn’t know. And I think people that I knew that knew how to do this learned from just trial and error, as well...So those were very helpful. I would, as a grad student, request maybe more of those, designed specifically for grad students. And I have since sent an e-mail, and then everybody’s been accommodating to allow me to sit in their office and go through that material with me. But most of everything I’ve done is just kind of – Google it, and then what comes up that looks like it’s a library, and then figuring it out, you know?¹²⁸

This interviewee taught themselves, with the assistance of peers, how to use the archives, and only fairly recently learned that the library could take a more active role in helping them.

The final interviewee is all digital in their research methods. They use Accordance software to have full access to primary source materials as well as many commentaries. From there, the interviewee uses Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ATLA to go through commentary authors’ bibliographies. The interviewee

¹²⁸ Ibid., 6.

scanned and OCR'd any print secondary sources to make them digital and searchable, and then they saved them as their own personal database.

I learned how to use ATLA and JSTOR as an undergrad at Florida State. As for the rest of it – yeah, the rest of it was pretty much all me. I guess some of it is because my dad – my dad has always been – well, since I was about eight or nine, my dad's been in IT... But I think I was first on the Internet in like 1991. So as a result, I had a lot more experience on that sort of thing. And I had actually experienced with primitive like bible software and things like that back in '94 maybe, learning how to text mining and things like that with various things. And then, you know, I was used – what? [Lykos], and Excite, and AltaVista. Then AltaVista, then Dogpile, then eventually Google. And back in the days when you had to Boolean everything, you had to know how to do all these various searches back in – you know. I learned how to do that when I was, you know, in middle school. So as a result, as I moved forward and became more of a researcher, all of that stuff just sort of stacks. And then learning how to do rudimentary-type coding, learning how to do certain – just learning how search engines thing, learning – ‘Oh, Google Scholar exists now. Now I can apply X methods that I've used in researching before to using this, which then allows me a backdoor to, you know, JSTOR or ATLA or what not.’ And then combining that with some of the stuff then, ‘Oh, this is a much more robust “Bible software” for much more than that. And now I can apply this, and this requires some change in workflow, but the same sorts of things apply. Now I have to learn that.’ So most of that was pretty organic and just basically, once I got to the limit of what one tool could do, it's, ‘Could I find another tool that would take me one step further on what I needed?’¹²⁹

The interviewee added that while they had picked up techniques from friends and people in their cohort, they never learned about research tools from faculty.

In regards to handling data – the necessary fruit of their research labors – most of the interviewees combined some form of physical data with digital.

Physical objects (artwork and print/phot-copied materials) tend to be stored in plastic boxes and on walls. Technologically “in-between” items are physical flash drives, external hard drives, voice memos on their smartphones, DVDs, and CDs.

¹²⁹ DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 22–23.

One student described scheduling his Mac to back itself up every twenty days through the built-in Time Machine feature, and that he would like at some point (as they have means) to set up their Wi-fi network so that as long as their computer is within range of the network, their computer is constantly backing itself up wirelessly to an external hard drive. Digital materials are stored in Dropbox and paid online back-ups (text files) and Google Drive (photos). To organize their data, students listed: Microsoft Word, Zotero, EverNote, FileMaker Pro, OneNote, self-owned (professional) websites (which by extension means using the hosting server for their website as another external hard drive; one student specifically recommended their server host – Reclaim Hosting – because Reclaim’s business model is targeted towards students and faculty members), DocEar, Scapple, Sente, Mendeley, Bookends, Scrivener, and Library Genesis. Additional technological tools that students mentioned using in their research are: Blender (a free/open-source 3D modelling software), Sketchfab (a website to publish, share, and discover three-dimensional and virtual reality content), DocEar, and Scapple (the latter two are both mind-mapping-esque note/thoughts visualization software), an activity tracker for their computer while dissertating (to help them keep track of how they use their time), WhatsApp to keep up with colleagues long distance. Telegram to keep up with colleagues in Iran. Yet in the face of so many digital tools, three students explicitly prefer to create and maintain their data in a tangible format over a digital. They were clear on this, but they also unmistakably still felt torn. One student described this tension as

It’s just way more convenient, even though this other part of me is like, yes, but it doesn’t feel as good as having it in your hands. Even when friends have tried to show me: Look how easy it is to highlight and do text

search within a PDF, I'm still like, it does not feel the same as literally taking a highlighter to this text, or literally writing in – obviously never in a library book, but – writing in the margins, my notes, or something. Religious studies are bad about it. I know this because almost every book I took out for my comps that were specifically on theory of religious studies, on how we get to religious studies – fascinating marginalia, that really helped me; but also, I was like, but these are library books.¹³⁰

As a fellow researcher, this author sympathizes with the student's tug-of-war between employing more digital materials (which would aid the doctoral student's undergraduate students) and the recognition that something (in this case helpful/humorous margin notes) is discretely lost in selecting the more convenient medium over the older one.

Publishing Practices

In many ways, the seven doctoral students' publishing behaviors are standard. Specific journal titles they named include: *JAAR (Journal of the American Academy of Religion)*, *Journal of Material Culture*, *Mizan: Journal for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations*, *Journal of Modern Archaeology*, *Journal of Biblical Literature* (flagship journal for the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)), the various publications released by ASOR (the American Schools of Oriental Research), *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, *Nova Religio*, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, *Monumenta Nipponica*, *New Testament Studies*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, *Harvard Theological Review*, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, *Church History*, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. Additionally,

¹³⁰ Number Four, Religious Studies Interview Number Four, 19.

there was the expected wish list for top tier university presses, as well as edited volumes. The students were able to name disciplinarily reasonable intersections with their specific research foci: one Biblical Studies student added economics and sociology journals to their list of potentials, while a different Biblical Studies student added Jewish Studies and Classics journals and said, “I should also add there’s going to be journals dealing with papyrology or textual criticism. I mean that’s where you look to for early Christianity, second, third, fourth century stuff.”¹³¹ In other words, the first Biblical scholar was looking outward from religious studies, and the latter was looking deeper. A different student altogether added “visual anthropology” to their religious studies interests. In contrast to those six individuals, the seventh student does not really have a “home base” for publishing because everything – from the name of the land mass they are centered on to the scholarly method they adopt to the department they join as a faculty member – is categorically grey. They point out,

I spend a lot of time thinking about how someone who’s in Islamic studies but also in contemporary Turkish or Middle Eastern studies could find themselves easily working through or with people in global studies or history or Middle Eastern studies which, you know, each university divides those up differently. So for instance, we have a Global Studies track, but not a Global Studies department, right? Which is a major for students. And we have a Global History track and a History department where people who work on the Middle East or other, you know, East Asia, et cetera, are located. And then in religious studies we have an Islamic Studies track, but that deals with various different people, right?¹³²

The student brings his point back to the question of *where* to publish by adding,

So if I was hired to teach contemporary Islam, it could be in a History department or it could be in a Religion department, or it could be in an

¹³¹ DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 16.

¹³² DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 20.

Asian Studies department who wants to have someone who works on Turkey. You know, so when you work on an area that gets divided up in different disciplinary focuses, it makes it hard to know exactly what job opportunities might exist for you. So then [hard] to know how you might target your research in publishing¹³³... I feel like a constant existential disciplinary crisis because I find myself drawing very much on global intellectual history, area studies kinds of issues, and modern Asian studies and religious studies, which I think UNC has done a kind of intentional job of making those boundaries kind of blurry because we don't have a separate/distinct language and cultural department here that teaches, you know, all of the East Asian and Middle Eastern languages. They're scattered over different departments, and the only thing that brings them together is the center, the Modern Muslim Civilization Center, here, which brings together those graduate students."¹³⁴

They do not see themselves typical of their field:

I would say no because my field in religion holds people who work in America, people who work in, you know, Africa and Central Asia, East Asia. You know, there's so many tracks in my field that really it's only discourse of discussion about what religion might be and how we talk about religion secondarily that links us together because otherwise we have no natural affinity for each other's research.¹³⁵

The irony then is that the very atypicalness of the students' work (as categorized by other religious studies' tracks) gives the student the substance with which they can find commonality with other scholars in their "field" – they are all atypically connected together. Furthermore, is the grey nature of defining "religious studies" itself that allows the student to have a voice in so many conversations:

I think that what Religion offers to these discussions is to ask other departments to take Religion more seriously and by saying, 'If you're not going to take Religion seriously, you need our expertise in order to understand precisely the pitfalls of talking about Religion as if it's some kind of abstract entity that everyone shares equally,' right? I think what religious studies does is asks a very pointed question about the ways in which all of the possible research trajectories of individual scholars deal with and address problems specific to the way we talk about religion today.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 24.

And that is not at all clear when you go into a history department or an anthro department or whatever, and you'll be lucky to find someone in that department who's followed the literature in religious studies or the disciplinary base within religious studies enough to be attentive of that in their own work. And so I think that's why I consider myself a religious studies scholar and direct myself to religious studies publications and institutions even if most people who would be interested in my writing will come out of other departments, would be to bring that question to the front and say, "Methodologically, theoretically, this is what sets me apart.

The author of this study sympathizes with this student regarding their perennial state of ontological flux. Yet not only is that the perfect state within which to represent the Orient/Near East/Middle East/North Africa/Asia Minor and its Arabic/Turkish/Greek/Farsi/Hebrew/Kurish/Armenian/Aramaic/Syriac/French/English-speaking peoples who have lived there since humans first migrated out of Sub-Saharan Africa...it is an outstanding holistic model of what scholarly work in the humanities *should* look like and as an embodied alternative to silo-based academia.

To continue discussing new models of scholarship, this author asked for the doctoral students' thoughts on publishing in open-access books and periodicals. While on the whole, all seven at the minimum gave a cautious "yes" as an answer, only one gave a whole-hearted yes...and that is because that student's flagship journal, the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, **is** open-access. Why were the other six reticent? Comprehensively they are reticent because as doctoral students, they are pre-tenure; they know that tenure committees by and large do not give open-access journals the same weight as the larger/known subscription-based journals. Since the tenure-seeking process is already fraught...why make it even more challenging unnecessarily? Beyond that,

there are other concerns. Two students described wanting to control what bodies of work are attached to their name and image as a public relations matter. As both of them suggest they will loosen up after attaining tenure, this author wonders whether their attitude is a function of being a new academic in a Google-able world. The other five all actively want to participate in the open-access project. In fact, one of these students said,

I don't understand the point of scholarship if it's not an open conversation that anyone can take part in. It upsets me to think about producing scholarly work and then immediately placing a limit on who can read and access it. Because I know how frustrating that is as a student when like all I want to do is engage and learn, and I need to pay \$30. I'm never going to read an article if I have to pay for it, just no, not going to happen. I would like to go back to open access, oh, absolutely. I mean, again, apart from like unless it was the difference between like money that I needed to survive, I can't see any reason to not be going open access. That [interfacing with the public] to me, seems like kind of the point of all of this, like yeah.¹³⁶

The student is articulating two concepts at odds with each other: that all publications should be freely accessible because education trumps arbitrary financial resources *and* that one should be compensated for one's work so that one has the means to buy food and comforts. To some degree the whole Academy is wrestling with these two opposite desires, and it is just as close to resolving them. Another student is experiencing a similar tension between implementing their utopic ideology and abiding by any legal contracts they sign: "If I get published though, and they're like you could put this chapter up as a free sample but you can't put the whole book, but no, otherwise I'd be happy to. I'd be happy to give it all away if someone lets me, basically."¹³⁷ One student is concerned

¹³⁶ DS Number Three, Doctoral Student Interview Number Three, 11.

¹³⁷ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 32.

about the absence of the peer-reviewed process from open-access publications because

I look to the peer-review process also as the necessary collaboration to bring out the best in the individual. And you want the best eyes. And you want people spending real time ripping apart your work so that when it's revealed to everyone else you can be proud of it...so that good stuff is going forth that will move the dialogue forward.¹³⁸

In other words, the student understands the value of the peer-review process as it currently stands, and they are arguing that there is a non-arbitrary reason as to why non-open-access journals are the status quo. Rightly or wrongly, for them the project of peer-collaborated excellence trumps any philosophical or ideological impulse to make the publication more publicly accessible. And one student reminds the author of this study that since open-access as a project is increasingly becoming mainstream, it is impossible to predict what their publishing behaviors will look like post-tenure:

I would be very open to doing so, yeah. I anticipate that it'll probably occur at some point with increasing demand and possibilities for open access. And then the increasing, I think, availability of open access to be kind of peer reviewed and taken seriously – those kinds of things change the orientation toward publishing in open access. I imagine that it will be seen as not a, you know, useless publication to do so.

It will be interesting to see if this student's optimism is borne out, either by the time they make tenure or, if not by then, the student as a tenured faculty member uses their agency to facilitate younger doctoral students' ability to use open-access publications for their tenure portfolio.

¹³⁸ DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 18–19.

A further manifestation of alternative publishing practices is the rise in all of the means outside of academic journals and monographs altogether for the doctoral students to share their data, reasoned interpretations, and off-the-cuff thoughts with the world. Six of the seven students either blog or want to blog – whether the latter is something they want to have ownership of or as a guest on someone else’s blog. The seventh student reasons: “Not right now and not in the near future – maybe in 10 or 15 years I might be interested in more popular work. Right now I don’t think that’s interesting at all. In fact, I think it’s a waste of time, personally...At this stage in my career, tweeting doesn’t get me a job.”¹³⁹ For this student, who has family responsibilities and a finite amount of time/energy at their disposal, such pragmatics seem utterly reasonable. In idealistic contrast, a different student argues,

Having a podcast, having blogs is very important because it’s a way of getting out the current scholarly understanding of knowledge, and not only that knowledge but how we produce knowledge. Because it’s always produced, it doesn’t just exist. We make it through our interpretations. And it’s important to understand the process of how we make knowledge and teach that as well as not only the thing being known...I would write for anybody. If there’s a [popular press] outlet to speak a message – I would still want to write because if I spent all my time researching these things, I better be of the mindset that it’s important to know. And if I think it’s important to know, I should be willing to share it.¹⁴⁰

For the second student, the dialogue of scholarship is as much about the conservation between academia and the public as it is between members of the academy itself, that is to say: it is a cause as much if not more than it is a career. In-between these two comes

¹³⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴⁰ DS Number Two, Doctoral Student Interview Number Two, 28.

As a graduate student to see the thought process of people you respect, how they actually process issues, and to recognize that it is something that takes time to develop, right, and it's not... No one crafts a brilliant argument or, you know, response in that moment. It's periods of reflection and you know... That to me is very helpful so I anticipate making those kinds of off-the-cuff things available.¹⁴¹

For this third student, blogging is a means to educate graduate students on the art of analyzing current events and crafting a response to them; it's a networking and growth opportunity in one, in a less formal setting. One of the six students in favor of blogging also tweets, but eschews popular press; in contrast a student wants to use it all:

I do blog. I've got about 5,000 Twitter followers. And then I've got a Facebook page for another venture. I've done TV in the past, I've done Internet – I do a lot of Internet video for my sports media stuff, so yes, yes, yes, et cetera. I plan to do a good bit of popular level publishing, as well. So I'll do, you know, some op-eds for various outlets, and then do some popular level books as well for your Barnes & Noble type books.¹⁴²

To conclude the section on publishing, it is important to consider the most grey of dissemination venues: one's website, whether personally owned or as a profile on a commercial website...i.e., Academia.edu and ResearchGate. One student describes their website content as

I guess self-publishing, but it's not really publishing. Just making – I wouldn't call it publishing. I would call that at least making my data available. I had written a blog post that morning organizing everything, but specifically if you want to see my 360 degree photos, the synagogues, I've put up a Google Cardboard viewer [to use with] your cellphone, you can do that here. You can look at my photograph machine models here, you can look at photos from those models and see the entire mosaic floor here. And so websites are a very powerful way I think to disseminate information.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 28.

¹⁴² DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 27–28.

¹⁴³ DS Number Two, Doctoral Student Interview Number Two, 23–24.

The student goes on to add:

There are several digital magazines and publishing houses, or publishing houses that have digital publication cycles that they go through. But this brings up an interesting problem because usually digital work requires twice as much work now because universities who don't respect digital work have the same – because usually digital work is seen as important, but is not regarded as publishing papers for purposes of tenure. And because of that, dissertation committees, if you do a digital project, you usually have to do an entire digital project, then, “Oh, by the way, you still have to write 350-page book.” So you can't do a full digital project most places, and then do 100-page book. I just have to be publishing a lot. I don't even know if that's possible, so that's my dream. I want to do that; I don't know if I'll be able to. So the Digital Humanities Initiative at UNC is engaging with that question, trying to figure out what is a good digital dissertation, but it's a process right now. And I want to do a good digital dissertation, but since it's in process of changing and it hasn't changed, so I'm still going to have to do both.¹⁴⁴

The author of this study wonders whether in light of changing what a “dissertation” is...whether eventually the Academy will make allowances for other publishing loads – such as recognizing the extra work required to OCR text in a non-Latin alphabet – and adjusting the number of pages they expect to have written or volumes to be published. In the meantime, five out of the seven doctoral students use Academia.edu and four out of the seven use ResearchGate. Interestingly, while three go into detail as to how they use Academia.edu, none one goes into detail regarding how they use ResearchGate. Was that happenstance? Are more religious studies scholars – or humanities scholars in general – using Academia.edu than they are ResearchGate? There is not enough data to tell. Furthermore, whether because of how they see Academia.edu in general or because they are so early in their publication career...the students use

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 25–26.

Academia.edu less as a dissemination vehicle for themselves, and more as a means to keep up with others. One uses it to keep up with what their favorite scholars are doing in the field,¹⁴⁵ while another utilizes it as

One of the sources that I use often for things that aren't published or, you know, are speeches or lectures given that people have put online, or drafts of things that are going up but haven't been published yet...And I think people I respect make their things available, and so I would kind of hope to return that because it's been very helpful for me to kind of stumble across something and then like, "I had no idea this person discussed this. Now I have access to it immediately."¹⁴⁶

A third student bridges the gap between limiting oneself to one's personal website and depending upon the health and kindness of a for-profit professional website:

I use my own website as my repository for that stuff, just partly because I don't want to feed into Academia or ResearchGate. I have accounts with both Academia and ResearchGate, but instead of having stuff uploaded to those places, my article citations and things there link to the files at my site so that I have more control of that. And also legally, it's a lot less grey because some of the journals and such that I've published with, I have the right to post a pre-publication proof but not the actual article or whatever. And it has to be on a personal site or whatever, so Academia or ResearchGate can be kind of fuzzy in terms of how that works. Plus, if there's going to be any money made on this, I'd rather, you know, come from my site rather than giving it to ResearchGate or Academia. If there's going to be any traffic, I want it coming to me, not to them. Use their stuff as a pointer to me. If whatever I publish in allows me to do both, then I'll do both. Because the benefit of having it in academic setting is a lot of those repositories, as I've found in my own research, those repositories, they're searchable by libraries and such worldwide where my website wouldn't be. And so for academics, it actually makes more sense to have that in a university archive that would be open access in that way so that, you know, if I search it from some library in Australia, I'll be able to find that article that's relevant to what I'm working on. And that's really what I'm more interested in. I'm more interested in sharing the ideas than I am in anything else. The rest is sort of self-preservation in terms of making sure that I can actually get, you know, enough to eat so that I can actually continue to produce that stuff.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 22.

¹⁴⁶ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 27–28.

¹⁴⁷ DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 27.

As various students have said, what the Academy considers to be dissertation and tenure-level work will continue to evolve. If greater and greater numbers of scholars “publish” their articles to the world by making them downloadable from their website...the question regarding the role of open-source publications in scholasticism may well be moot shortly.

State of the Field

This author asked the students what their biggest frustration was in doing research, and alongside that, asked them how UNC/their department/the library could aid them better. The author’s final question for them was to name the greatest challenges and opportunities facing religious studies in an effort to take the conversation out of their immediate departmental/campus space and connect it to the larger dialogue scholars in religious studies in particular, and in humanities and social science in general, are having amongst themselves...because ultimately those conversations affect the public’s perspective, which in turn impacts the ways and means scholars are able to do their work. While many of the of the (reasonable) frustrations were limited to the actual work of doing research, students repeatedly showcased their awareness of what is happening at wider political and social levels – at the departmental level, at the university-wide policy level, at the state level, and at the international level – refuting the classic portrayal of doctoral students as unable (or unwilling) to notice or care about anything outside of their immediate research interests.

All of the students were clear that on the whole their research needs are met successfully between the work of the religious studies department and both

Duke and UNC's libraries. Even so, there are places for improvement. One student expressed irritation with multiples instances the library's undergraduate student circulation policy trumps the student's need: certain materials are only shelved in the Robert B. House Undergraduate Library (which restricts their checkout time to thirty days instead of ninety days, even if one is a graduate student) or are on course reserve even though the professor is not teaching that class this semester (which restricts checkout time to twenty-four hours).¹⁴⁸ Two students highlighted the crucial limitations of physical space that limit their work. Religious studies doctoral students do not have office space in Carolina Hall. Carrels fill that gap, but carrels are only helpful when the student can get *to* them – a feat made impossible by zero parking and any time the library needs to close.¹⁴⁹ The second student never was able to get a carrel at all, so they highlighted how inaccessibility makes the library's digital resources all the more critical. Returning to the other students' critique of Carolina Hall's floor space, they added:

And now there's just like a separate office for specific office hours that are set aside that's in another building on campus. I don't even know where it is...But that specific, like, little room or office for shared office space for office hours is the only thing they have access to. That's, I think, a significant problem. That's one of the biggest weaknesses of the department. It's a great department, but not having access to decent workspace is not good.¹⁵⁰

Students expressed frustration at the way the university treats them:

I guess just more - this also gets into recent on-campus politics, but more recognition of just the general needs. Obviously, this is at the university

¹⁴⁸ DS Number Two, Doctoral Student Interview Number Two, 21.

¹⁴⁹ DS Number Three, Doctoral Student Interview Number Three, 9.

¹⁵⁰ DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 21–22.

level; I'm not saying, oh, the library is oppressing our rights or anything, but it's pretty clear from that recent vote about trying to make a separate graduate student government receiving 66 percent of what was needed to be 66.7 percent of a vote. That clearly people are interested. They have a desire to have some voice heard. And I think the fact that the school just continues to treat us in this weird dualist way, is the best way to maybe put it, in that when they want us to be students we are just students and we should be happy to just be students, and when we're employees we're employees and never the twain shall meet. There is very little done to recognize that we are in this weird position where we are both and we kind of deserve the rights of both. I don't know if that's the best way to put it but we kind of deserve some recognition that we're not asking to be treated better than either side; we're asking to be treated with the same respect that either side is treated, yet we fall into this weird place where we kind of get the worst of both and not necessarily the benefits of either.¹⁵¹

And there are frustrations that result from working with unpublished materials in a foreign country with a different copyright model, that are not in a Latin-based alphabet (which makes OCR impossible, which makes them unsearchable).¹⁵²

Frustrations that digital materials from outside UNC's library are not systematic in their log-on/access steps. Frustrations that UNC and Duke have strong Arabic and Persian collections, but not Turkish (and what there is tends to be housed at Duke, which means it takes time to get it over to UNC)...combined with the fact that neither liaison librarian at Duke and UNC have real familiarity with Turkish resources.¹⁵³ At the same time, however, students suggested remedies for the problems they had encountered. For example, when one student shared his frustration with the lack of communication between the religious student graduate students, faculty, and the library, they suggested adding the religious studies librarian to the graduate student listserv:

¹⁵¹ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 27.

¹⁵² DS Number One, Doctoral Student Interview Number One, 4.

¹⁵³ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 16–17.

It's at least a place where everyone is getting those emails. And we do still send out emails over that when we're announcing the kind of department events that we're running. The kinds of things where teaching committee or writing committee or even just specific grad students who want to try and organize some kind of event or get volunteers for something and use that.¹⁵⁴

The student's thought in suggesting this – supremely and delightfully simple – fix was to address the reality that all of these people are nominatively connected but in reality everyone is engrossed in their own work and oblivious to everyone else. The author of this study, however, was struck by how access to this listserv would ensure continuity of communication even as all of the players involved eventually leave. A second example is a student's attempt to remedy the time-delay built into requesting items be sent over from Duke or the cost in getting there physically:

If I had easier access to Duke's library, if there was like a UNC library/Duke Robertson pass that you could check out, so it's not just like to an individual, but if there were like 30 of them or something – And I could go check it out for two hours, that would be nice. You get the Robertson bus for the next five hours or six hours, but you've got to bring it back. I don't know. Is that an option? Like that would be helpful. That'd be kind of cool. I understand ... like I get the pragmatics of having to charge money for the bus, and we can't give everyone free bus passes, because the more people you're going to spend more gas. I get that. But if there was a way to facilitate it for those who were really serious ... where it's like, "No, look. I'll actually go to Duke." I mean if it would facilitate a little bit more ... and how much more is it going to cost if there's only 10 of them per day? And who knows. Maybe that wouldn't be enough, and maybe it wouldn't work. But throwing it out there as a possibility.¹⁵⁵

A third example is a student thanking UNC Libraries for/access to technology workshops, but pointing out that those workshops have been so successful that

At these 30-minute workshops or hour-long workshops you just know enough to realize how much you don't know or what do you do after that.

¹⁵⁴ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 26.

¹⁵⁵ DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 15.

So I wish there would be more... a continuing curriculum for these sort of things, which the Science Library just started to do in the Makerspace with learning – instead of just learning the basic programmable microprocessor, there's intro to electronics, just to understand how electricity works and how it travels along a board, and then there's workshops one, two and three, and then there's even more advanced classes that will be offered. And so you're not just learning the introductory material, but you're moving beyond that.¹⁵⁶

A fourth example is an effort to improve not just the communication issues between the graduate students at the library, but to improve graduate students' on-the-ground research techniques – which by extension would also reinforce why a liaison librarian is necessary in the first place:

I definitely could have used – and I'm sure there's probably some graduate students who already would be cursing my name or anything just for more work but – a one-credit, get used to Davis Library; get used to the resources available; not just at UNC, in the triangle. We have this great relationship with Duke and NC state where, again, it's like a lot of things. I learned by doing rather than – and in some ways that's good; but in other ways I wish someone could have sat me down, even it wasn't a whole one-credit class; even if it was one evening. Hey, new grad students, let's talk about what you can do here, instead of assuming we knew. The most I got – because I don't want to make it sound like they gave me nothing – is, during my orientation weekend, they brought us in here. They introduced us to Robert. They took us to the next part of our tour. That's all we really got. We were introduced to him so that we basically recognized him and had his email address. Then we were moved on. It was part of just a campus tour more than anything.¹⁵⁷

This author would like to give Robert and the departmental staff the benefit of the doubt in that research has shown that new students are too overwhelmed during orientation to remember much of anything the librarian teaches them, so perhaps Robert did not want to waste his time or theirs. But it would seem to this author that the student is suggesting a reasonable happy medium between a full-

¹⁵⁶ DS Number Two, Doctoral Student Interview Number Two, 22.

¹⁵⁷ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 21.

on workshop during orientation and a full research methods class during the schoolyear.

Aptly, perhaps, all seven students saw the challenges and opportunities for religious studies coming not from their department or even the Academy, but from the world at large. These challenges include negotiating the hostile political relationship between the US and Iran in order to go to Iran to conduct research and figuring out how to be an Islamic Studies scholar in the post-9/11 world:

The current reality of American Islamophobia means that I get stretched academically in different directions – I both need to respond to it, but also I don't because it's outside my research focus...And because I am aware that so few people get to go to Iran, I have this sense that I need to make the most of it, that I need to recognize my privilege through disseminating as much information as I can. I also feel that it's on me to increase access for myself and other scholars to the best of my ability.¹⁵⁸

The need for a scholar to parse out when to neutrally observe, when to advocate, and when/how to accept that they themselves are a subject (and not an agent) in the commentary on their research focus...that is not something with which a religious studies scholar of Christianity or of a pre-modern population will have to wrestle. Consequently, a further challenge is getting religious studies scholars with their broad range of experiences regarding power dynamics built on the public's "id" all on the same page as a community. In fact, one student even points this out explicitly:

Challenges facing religious studies – I think internally, it has to do with the different disciplinary backgrounds that people in religious studies come from, and then trying to be able to talk to each other across those disciplinary backgrounds or divides, perhaps. Where certain people think that sources are the most important thing, and other people think that, you know, theories and methods is the most important thing. And you

¹⁵⁸ DS Number One, Doctoral Student Interview Number One, 6.

know, other people want to do fieldwork – anyway. So I think that’s a real struggle in trying to herd cats basically, and figure out how to... Take graduate students who are doing very different things and make a department that’s for all of them, that benefits all of them and not just certain people based on, you know, the histories of what people have done in the department before...Everyone is interdisciplinary in religion, whether they want to be or not, and that makes it hard because people don’t know what to do when they come – if a religious program is not the one that they end up going to, directly. I don’t think there’s anyone in our department, except for maybe one faculty member, that is [a] religious studies PhD, and I think that reflects generally how, you know, most departments are.¹⁵⁹

One student discusses the challenge of better integrating campus-based conversation with that of the general public:

I think also, to some degree, certain theoretical pursuits and the disconnect between the academy and “the real world” is also another factor because you, you know – We just saw in this last election that there’s large sectors of the world that really couldn’t care less what’s happening, you know, in the world of theory, on the campus. There needs to be some connect between research, generally, and what also makes it worthwhile and how it can apply to and be persuasive rhetorically for those who are outside the bubble. So I think that’s another big challenge because in religious studies that’s really important. I mean...Or opportunity. Religion actually governs quite a bit of thinking, so you know that needs to be something that’s addressed better than it is.¹⁶⁰

The idea that there needs to be a better bridge between the scholastic and everyday worlds is furthered by the ways in which two other students’ connect what they see as challenges to national politics. This author acknowledges the reality that religiosity, particularly Christian religiosity, coats everything in the United States: public policy, history, the delineation between public space and private (both literally and as a stand-in for schools of higher learning and for business spheres)...because undergirding all of this is an anxiety around identity

¹⁵⁹ DS Number Six, Doctoral Student Interview Number Six, 30.

¹⁶⁰ DS Number Seven, Doctoral Student Interview Number Seven, 31.

(as a citizen and as a country). Therefore, the author agrees with the first student's point that

I think the greatest opportunity and the greatest challenge are the same, and that's how can we be a voice in society as a non-religiously-affiliated group of people that study religion. Because every time I turn on the news, every time I turn on a documentary, religion permeates everything especially in the United States, whether or not you're a Christian or have had any overt interaction with Christianity – Christianity still affects everybody because there are people making policies based on specific doctorates. And I think that the greatest help that religious studies can give to society is not necessarily – not the right way to read something or interpret something. And that's dangerous because that's just becoming what scares me about society having one specific way to read something or interpret something, but our modes of knowledge production, about how we do research, why we come to conclusions, why we have theories, how to arrive at those theories – those are a thing. That's the most important thing that religious scholars could be doing that I don't see them doing enough.

In other words, the study of religion *matters*, and the *words* of those who engage in that study, who have citations to support their claims and have socio-political capital through networking/credentialing/the “right” gender/the “right” skin-color matter. Their *silence* matters. But when to use those words? The second student says

I think considering the kind of rhetoric coming both out of this past election and obviously the aftermath now of the election, the frankly terrifying things that are happening, the kinds of abuse that's already being hurled on people - not always just for religion, it's sometimes over race, over gender or sexuality - but yes, sometimes over religion. And often these categories obviously get muddled in their own fun ways - that I think, though we're often and even at this program, even in the religious studies program at UNC which, I'm going to be honest, sometimes disappoints me that it sells itself as being a very liberal program but is ultimately I think - I think it attempts to be very neutral. I think for how much it says it wants to be a super-liberal program, we often try to just stay out of things and not directly engage. And I know a big part of that is being at a school like UNC, in a state like North Carolina, that we're looking out for ourselves maybe and maybe we're worried about will our funding go away if we become too politicized? But I also feel like with what

may or may not happen over the next four years, I think it really wraps into both; both the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunities. This is a time where people in religious studies could really - I don't know why I want to use the metaphor, put your money where your mouth is because that's not the right phrase at all; it doesn't really capture it all - but we could actually be taking a stand. We could actually be the kind of people who are fighting for - and again this is now getting really personal - but fighting for what I think most of us in this kind of - at least in this department - feel would be a better world. Fighting for peoples' rights, fighting for people's right to basic respect and decent treatment. And I feel like even someone doing Japanese religions, off here in this like completely other side of the planet, doesn't seem like it could be related at all, I still feel like even there, there are things I could do in talking - again, I mean this was what my project was way before any of this happened - talking about the ways that politics and public opinion can marginalize groups of people and trying to think through why that happens, how that happens, what could be done potentially to fight that or prevent it, or even if we can't do that much at least understand it. So again, I realize that probably a lot of people wouldn't go that direction because, again, it feels like a lot of people are just trying to be very careful right now. But if anything, I think now is not the time to be careful.

When is discretion "the better part of valor," and when is it cowardice? Is the student taking a powerful/morally right stand when they say:

I told my students the first Wednesday after - I did not cancel class because we actually got an angry email telling us we weren't allowed to cancel class - I told people that I was not taking any attendance the day after the election and so no one came, and I'm sure most of them just didn't come because they just were happy to get an unofficial day off. But I got some very nice emails from some students who were really struggling and who appreciated that someone was giving them some time to breathe. And on Monday I told all my students, where I was like, "I'm not going to get directly political, I don't know your politics, I don't want to know your politics because I don't want any of you to think I'm going to judge you differently based on anything," and because, let's be honest we all - like I would if I did know. But I was just like, "It has only been a couple of days and people are already being assaulted, harassed, attacked, here is my only request of all of you. I got into teaching, and I know I'm teaching you guys about funny stories that happened in Japan 1,000 years ago, but I got into teaching stuff like Japan and other cultures because I think that's how we learn to understand each other. It's how we learn anything about people outside of our immediate vicinity, our immediate demographic, our immediate bubble, and I think that helps people learn to be better to one another." So I was like, "I will stop upsetting you. I will stop distracting

from this but I just want to say that - in my syllabus I said right at the beginning that I wanted this to be a safe space where you all felt cool to express your opinions, and what I'm asking you to do, if you learn nothing else from this class, forget everything about Japan for all I care, make the spaces around you safe, please, because there are people who need safe spaces right now." And then I started crying like I'm about to start crying right now because I'm frigging baby - and I had students like hugging me and afterwards telling how much they needed that. It's such a little dumb thing and I know I can't save the world or anything like that, but I really do think we could at least help others so much. Like it probably made some people uncomfortable but like it's not bad to be uncomfortable sometimes, however. But I don't know, it's especially hitting me because I have a student who is from Venezuela and is literally telling me that his family is discussing whether to move, "I haven't been threatened or anything yet but my family is already discussing whether we're going to move before January." And he's like, "I've lived in this country since I was four, like I don't actually ..." - he's like, "As far as I'm concerned I'm American. I wasn't born here - But all of my memories are of here." I don't even - and this is me being bad - I don't even know if he has citizenship, I don't know if he is just still here, because obviously he wasn't born here so it's not necessarily guaranteed. But to hear him be like, "I don't even know where my home is going to be in a few months." It's part of why I felt like I needed to say something to the class.¹⁶¹

Or are they permitting their subjective biases to interfere with what should be an objective lesson in a way that keeps the undergraduate students from making their own, independent, assessment? Perhaps the true challenge is that there is no good answer and no way to know.

And the final challenge is the expected one: what is the future for religious studies/the humanities/the Academy? One student refers to this cloud of ill omen by saying

And again, like this is really depressing when I say it here, who knows how much liberal arts departments are even going to be funded in two years so why even worry about it right now?...I don't want to sound really like the sky is falling or anything, but [we] may not have the same opportunities to

¹⁶¹ DS Number Four, Doctoral Student Interview Number Four, 38-39.

even talk about those things in even one year's time, so obviously we're all going to hope that's not true but it is a distinct possibility, unfortunately¹⁶²

when mulling over how to respond to the current political climate.

Another brings it up in relation to their job prospects:

You hear things ... I mean you hear about dissolving humanities. You hear about the threat about the loss of humanities. And I take that seriously when I hear things like that. But then you also wonder, "Is it real? Is this really happening?" And I'll be honest. In some ways I don't feel qualified to answer this because I don't think I've put in the time to speak with any sort of real data other than just sort of the winds. Because I hear about how we're losing the humanities. So that would be a threat. That's a threat. But then I asked the question, are there less jobs? I don't know. It seems to me like a lot of universities seem to be adding religious studies departments. Maybe I'm crazy, but it just seems that I keep hearing of new departments – or maybe not religious studies departments but at least interdisciplinary or they'll have a religious studies major. And then it's the first time they've had a religious studies major at this state school. And they don't have a full department yet. They'll just bring in recruits and people from English and history and philosophy and classics and offer something. That, to me, seems like an opportunity. That seems to me like there's an interest. I don't know though. I would love – and I'm not asking you to do this – but as a wish I would love to hear or have access to some sort of state of the discipline where you could feel some degree of confidence in a report that's being given that takes seriously the threats and the problems but at the same time doesn't try to overstate them as a way of marshalling up people's energy. But let's shoot straight with each other. What's working? What's not? I wish I knew. I don't know. I think they [AAR] have group meetings... I probably should start going to those. I guess I'm imagining ... and yeah, this is hard to ... I'm sure they do. I'm sure that there's – Yeah, probably [there are statistics]. Here I am wishing for something that's happening probably tomorrow morning, and I'm just not there. So yeah, I don't know how to answer it...I hate that it keeps coming back to job market for me. But that just shows where I am. Most of my conversations have to do with getting a job in the next three years. So yeah, the reason why I started all this talking about I hear all the bad news, and it freaks me out. But then I want to be optimistic...There aren't very many jobs that come out each year. And yet, we placed three people last year. And so I'm like ... so something's working. We're doing something right. For as apocalyptic as this feels, it doesn't feel like the end. So yeah, I think there are probably better minds ... or at least people who are in better positions to address the question of the field. I'm not sure I'm the best. My

¹⁶² Ibid., 37–38.

perspective really is based on this next step. And you heard it in what I talked about – it's in wanting more information that you can feel confident in about the field. It probably is being discussed at AAR. I wish they'd publish it. Send it to me. Send it to my email inbox. I wish I could get on an email feed so I don't have to go looking for it. Just send it to me.¹⁶³

And a third student puts things even more baldly:

But the current model is unsustainable in that, you know, it'll take you eight plus years to get a degree in my area, and then there might be 10-12 jobs worldwide that you can apply to. There's going to be probably – what? – 40 or 50 people who would be qualified for that job or at least on the market every year. So you got the pile develops behind them that's in post-docs, or I'm in a lectureship right now. So you have 10-12 jobs of which there are 150 applicants for each one, every year. That's an unsustainable model. So that is probably the biggest hurdle, the biggest problem.

In other words, even if the second student is right to feel optimistic right now, at their root things still need to change, or the “tree” (to continue the root analogy) will topple over. But what is the remedy? This author knows no better than the students...after all there is a *reason*, not an accident, as to why things are the way they are. If “it” – the divide between gown and town – is the nature of the beast...what then? This author does not know. But at least current doctoral students are aware of these events on their horizon, and are open (based on their divergent research methods, strategies, and technologies) to moving the research in a new direction.

¹⁶³ DS Number Five, Doctoral Student Interview Number Five, 24–27.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that, in contrast to media portrayals, religious studies doctoral students are incredibly mindful of the world outside their immediate research. They pay attention to departmental politics, university policies, the needs of their undergraduate students, the conversation in the popular press about their industry, and national politics. Consequently, they are always looking for new means to simplify their work flow and maximize their time-management. Between that modus operandi and their positive feelings toward the library, there is a world of opportunity for UNC Libraries to better integrate itself with its doctoral students. And after all...these are the faculty members of tomorrow.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Intro:

Researcher: I am a current graduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill completing my Masters in Science in Library Science (MSLS). I already completed a Master of Divinity (MDiv) at Duke Divinity School and anticipate working as a religious studies liaison librarian at a four-year college or university, and so I hope the results of this study will assist me (and other humanities librarians) in better serving current doctoral student research needs. I also participated in a parallel research study this spring with UNC-Chapel Hill's religious studies faculty, and am interested in seeing where the two results compare and contrast.

For the next forty to sixty minutes I will be asking a series of questions about your research experiences and practices as a PhD student. You may ask to skip any question, at any time.

1. Are you legally an adult by virtue of being of eighteen years of age or more?

Research Focus:

2. What brought you to the study of religion?
3. Describe your current research focus and
 - A. How is your focus situated within the larger religious studies discipline?
 - B. How is your focus situated within the broader academy?
 - a. Is there a specific religion you're studying?
 - b. Solidly within a discipline? Interdisciplinary?

Research Methods:

4. How would you characterize your theoretical approach to religion?
5. What research methods do you currently use to conduct your research?
 - A. What made you select this method?

- B. Where would you say you learned how to practice this method?
- 6. What kinds of data does your research typically produce?
 - A. How and where do you currently keep this data?
 - B. Where do you plan to store this data in the long term?
- 7. When collecting your data, what is your method for keeping it organized?
 - A. Do you use citation software?
 - B. Do you use other apps or software programs for data organization?
- 8. Beyond data you produce yourself, what kinds of sources does your research depend on?
 - A. How do you locate these materials?
- 9. What would you say is your biggest frustration when conducting research?
- 10. How could the department and university better support you in your research?

Publishing Practices:

- 11. Where do you (anticipate) publishing your research?
 - A. Publication titles?
 - B. Discipline categories?
- 12. How do your publishing aspirations relate to those typical to your discipline?
- 13. Do you anticipate publishing your research in an open access journal?
 - A. If so, which journals and what is your motivation?
 - B. If no, why not?
- 14. Do you anticipate making use of open access repositories for publishing?
 - A. Institutional archives?
 - B. Academia.edu and ResearchGate
- 15. Beyond scholarly publishing, are there any other venues that you use to disseminate your research?
- 16. How do you keep up with professional trends within religious studies and/or across the academy?

State of the Field and Follow-Up

- 17. From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges and opportunities currently facing religious studies?
- 18. Is there anything else about your experiences or scholarly focus that you think is important for me to know that was not covered in the previous questions?

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear UNC-Chapel Hill Religious Studies PhD Student,

We are conducting a research study entitled “Research Support Services for Religious Studies PhD Students” to better understand both the ways in which current PhD students in this discipline gather research and which library resources they are using. PhD students provide invaluable insight regarding shifts in research, library science, and publishing, yet little research has been conducted with them in comparison to their more senior faculty-status colleagues. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be used by UNC University Libraries staff, academic library staff members in general through professional organizations, humanities faculty across the country, researchers studying trends in higher education, and by other PhD students - in an effort to improve PhD student’s instruction in the art of research and to improve library assistance with PhD-student-particular research bottlenecks. Although we are distributing this invitation through a professional organization (UNC’s Religious Studies Department Graduate Studies Committee), the leaders of the Graduate Studies Committee are not affiliated with the project.

To participate in the study, you must be eighteen years old or older. Once that is established, you will take part in an in-person semi-structured interview that should take between forty and sixty minutes. At the time of the interview, you will read and sign an informed consent form advising you of your rights in participating in this study. The consent form will ask you if the interview might be audio-recorded for later transcription. The consent form will also include information on how the interview data will be protected.

Your participation is confidential. You will not be asked for any identifying information in the survey questions. All data obtained in this study will be reported as group data. No individual can be or will be identified. The only persons who will have access to the data are us, as the Principal Investigators. There are neither anticipated risks should you participate, nor anticipated personal benefits from this study. The information obtained will be communicated through publication in the literature and presentations at professional meetings. There is no cost to you for your participation.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to the included email address and include your current research focus and year in this program. We will not share your email address or use your email for any reason other than to set up a time for the interview and to email you the link to a \$30 electronic Amazon gift certificate as compensation for your time. Your email address will not be kept or stored with any interview information.

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

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APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study: # 16-2630

Consent Form Version Date: 10/27/2016

Title of Study: Research Support Services for Religious Studies PhD Students

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Flynn

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Information & Library Science

Email Address: keflynn@live.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell

Study Contact telephone number: 919-843-5276

Study Contact email: smhughes@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future, and so you may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There may also be risks to participating in a research study.

You are under no obligation to participate, and you may withdraw your consent – for any reason at any time – without penalty.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to ascertain: 1.) how religious studies PhD students at UNC-Chapel Hill perform their research and 2.) how the library is, or is not, meeting their research needs during their process.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of five religious studies PhD students at UNC-Chapel Hill in this study.

How long will your part in the study last?

The interview will take between forty to sixty minutes. All data – notes, audio recordings, and transcriptions – will be destroyed upon completion of this study.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

In this study, you will be one of five religious studies PhD students of eighteen years of age or older interviewed in a one-on-one setting. As the preface to your interview, you will be asked to verbally avow that you are 18 years old or older. You will be asked the same set of interview questions as the other four participants. If you consent, your interview will be recorded with a digital audio recorder in order to ensure the most accurate study results. Your audio records will then be downloaded to a password-protected external hard drive. All of your particular transcriptions, codes, and resulting will be stored on the same hard drive, in their own password-protected folder, and your name will be replaced by a pseudonym.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

The research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge, and the researchers hope that the information obtained from this study may empower graduate school educators and academic librarians to better support religious studies doctoral students across the academy. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There no known risks involved with this study.

How will your privacy be protected?

Your responses to this interview will be anonymous. Please do not include any identifying information in your interview. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a password-protected hard drive.
- This signed consent form will be scanned onto a password-protected laptop and then saved to the same password-protected hard drive

mentioned above. At this point, the physical copy of the signed consent form will be shredded. The process will be completed within 24 hours of the interview.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

Since this study will take time, you will receive a \$30 Amazon e-gift certificate after all of the interviews have been completed.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all of the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Your signature if you agree to be in this study

Date

Printed name if you agree to be in the study