

Investigating the Needs of Religious Studies Scholars:

A MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL
COLLABORATIVE
APPROACH



AGENDA

1. Meta-theoretical underpinnings
2. Introduction to the Research Support Services program
3. Overview of the Religious Studies Project
4. Preliminary insights

RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

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 - » Coordinator, Research Support Services Program
- » MI, University of Toronto
- » PhD Candidate, York University
- » Research focus:
 - » Ethnographic methods in libraries and archives
 - » Information activity beyond institutional contexts



META-THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Scholar as information-seeker

- » Researchers have different needs and behaviors associated with searching information for their research and this varies by discipline (Gannon-Leary et al. 2007, Hemminger et al. 2007, Herman 2001, Schonfeld and Guthrie 2007, Sheeja 2010 and Tennant and Cataldo 2002).

Role of library research

- » In order to attend to researchers, information spaces and services must be designed in ways that take these researchers' information needs and behaviors into account (Hepworth 2004 and Spink et al. 2007)
- » Qualitative library research should not only be applied on a smaller scale to solve institution-specific problems but also be designed towards more sustained and open forms of exploration that incorporates collaboration with and comparison between libraries (e.g. Lanclos and Asher, 2016)

RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

- » An ongoing program to examine the research support needs of scholars by discipline
- » Previous studies:
 - » History (Schonfeld and Rutner 2012)
 - » Chemistry (Schonfeld and Long 2013)
 - » Art History (Schonfeld and Long 2014)
- » Current studies:
 - » Religious Studies (launched January 2016)
 - » Agriculture (launched April 2016)
 - » Public Health (launched October 2016)

RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

- » Ithaca S+R partners with 7-20 academic libraries who assemble research teams with 1-4 members
- » Ithaca S+R designs research instruments and assembles an advisory committee to help guide the project
- » Research teams attend a methods workshop hosted by Ithaca S+R to launch project



Interviewer: So, at this very organic level, at the very beginning, how are you encountering these primary sources? How do you decide which ones to read and explore?

Interviewee: It depends. My last book, I came out of a classroom situation. I had a student ask me a question that I didn't know the answer to and I went and did a Google search to find the answer and came across the primary sources and they had a bunch of them in my office and the special collections at our library. And so I just went into the library and started reading them. So, that came from a classroom question.

My book that I'm writing now, when I came for my interview here 17 years ago, somebody mentioned Mormons in Michigan in the 19th century and I thought that they were wrong, so I got curious about that and discovered a community that was very interesting to me. As for my first book, I probably was reading missionary sources and seminars and I got really interested in them and so I decided that I wanted to read more and it developed as an argument after reading through them.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I'm also wondering -- so your first book was it based on your dissertation?

- Danielle Cooper
Research topic: comes from classroom question
- Danielle Cooper
Research topic: comes from question with unknown answer
- Danielle Cooper
Google find to find primary sources
- Danielle Cooper
Circulated primary sources at own institution
- Danielle Cooper
Read primary sources at library
- Danielle Cooper
Research topic: from job interview
- Danielle Cooper
Research topic: from casual mention
- Danielle Cooper
A few seconds ago
Research topic: emerges from reading primary sources



RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

- » Each research team conducts research on about 15 scholars at their own institution
 - » Semi-structured interviews focused on the full research life-cycle (e.g. research methods, information management, publishing)
 - » Photography
- » Who are scholars for the purpose of this project?
 - » Tenure track faculty or personnel who regularly conduct research as part of their work
 - » Out of scope: graduate students, adjunct faculty or personnel who do not regularly conduct research



RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

- » The study results in two project outputs:
 - » Each research team writes a report on their local findings, which may be made publically available
 - » Ithaka S+R takes a sample of the information collected across the participating institutions and writes a capstone report made publically available
- » Findings from the study are also used as the basis for further research and future outputs

The screenshot shows the ePLACE digital repository interface. At the top, it features the ASBURY Theological Seminary logo and the ePLACE tagline "Presenting, Learning, and Creative Exchange". Below the header is a search bar and navigation links. The main content area displays a paper titled "Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Religious Studies Research's" by Paul A. Healy, David Hooser, and Wendy Carter. It includes a "Download Full Text (128 KB)" button and a "Download" link. The page also lists the publisher as First Fruits Press and the place of publication as Winona, Ky. A sidebar on the right contains a search bar and navigation options like "Browse", "Collections", "Disciplines", and "Authors".

The infographic is titled "Participation in a large-scale study to evaluate agricultural research support services" and is attributed to Megan Kacher and Shannon Farrell, University of Minnesota Libraries. It is divided into several sections: "The Project", "The Process", "The Participants", "The Findings", "Preliminary Findings", "Challenges", and "Conclusions". The "The Process" section includes a circular flow diagram with steps: "Agreement to participate in the study", "Development of a research protocol and survey instrument", "Recruitment of participants", "Data collection", "Data analysis", and "Reporting of findings". The "The Participants" section lists logos for various institutions including ASU, PURDUE, UCDAVIS, and VT. The "The Findings" section includes a table with columns for "Year", "Institution", "Study Area", "Survey Method", and "Survey Date". The "Preliminary Findings" section lists key findings such as "Agricultural research support services are needed to support the needs of agricultural researchers" and "Agricultural research support services are needed to support the needs of agricultural researchers". The "Challenges" section lists challenges such as "Limited resources", "Limited time", and "Limited expertise". The "Conclusions" section lists conclusions such as "Agricultural research support services are needed to support the needs of agricultural researchers" and "Agricultural research support services are needed to support the needs of agricultural researchers".

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

KEY ISSUES

Changes in religious studies

- » Mixed methods and interdisciplinary approaches
- » Digital technologies and social media
- » How to define “religious studies”
 - » The relationship between theology studies and religious studies
 - » Traditionally humanistic, ethnography increasingly popular



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

KEY ISSUES

Shifts in the academy and public sphere

- » Decline of the humanities
- » Vulnerability of small private colleges
- » Public perception of religion
- » Emerging social movements

Information-specific issues

- » Open-access
- » Budget cuts to library and archives collections
- » Decrease in monograph publishers
- » Increasing reliance on digital collections



THE CHRONICLE REVIEW



ADVICE



The Repression of Religious Studies



Andrea Levy for The Chronicle Review

By Wendy Doniger | APRIL 20, 2016 | PREMIUM

In 2015, Harvard University Press began to publish the Murry Classical Library of India, a series of editions and translations of texts in a wide range of Indian languages, under the direction of Sheldon Pollock, professor of South Asian studies at Columbia University. In February, 2016, 132 academics in India petitioned to have Pollock removed as general editor. They were raising their voices not as subject experts — many were scientists or doctors lacking competence to judge humanistic scholarship — but as Hindus. Why did

Losing Faith in Religious Higher Education

What happens when a seminary professor joins the religiously "unaffiliated"?



Estaban Chover / Creative Commons

By Brandon G. Withrow | JULY 06, 2015

Raised in an evangelical home. Published by evangelical publishers. Employed by an evangelical seminary and divinity school. That was my life until last year when — at the end of a long and difficult intellectual journey — I concluded I was

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Sponsors

- » American Theological Library Association (ATLA)
- » Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)
- » American Academy of Religion (AAR)

Participants

1. Baylor University
2. Concordia Theological Seminary
3. Emory University
4. Luther Seminary
5. Naropa University
6. Rice University
7. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
8. University of Notre Dame
9. Vanderbilt University
10. Asbury Seminary
11. Brigham Young University
12. Columbia University
13. Harvard University
14. Jewish Theological Seminary of America
15. Princeton Theological Seminary
16. Temple University
17. Tufts University
18. Yale University

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Project next steps

- » Participants making reports publically available (November 2016)
- » Ithaca S+R finalizing capstone report (November-December 2016)
- » Final report launched with links to publically available local reports (January 2017)

Findings to watch

- » Scholar as collector
- » Digital research ubiquitous but minimal attention to digital research methodologies
- » Lack of awareness of/participation in open access

RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

Challenges

- » Coordinating with a large group of participants across multiple institutions
- » Striking balance between local and collaborative research aims

Key benefits

- » This project's qualitative approach is a unique way to:
 - » Develop relationships between librarians, scholars and other disciplinary constituents
 - » Provide new opportunities for information professionals to develop their qualitative research skills
 - » Capture the practices and needs of researchers collaboratively and cross-institutionally

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