Library as Research Site: The Local Value of Participating in a National Research Project

Dr. Jenifer Gundry and Virginia Dearborn
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

Library Assessment Conference, October 31, 2016
@LA_Conference #lac16
Princeton Theological Seminary

- Founded: 1812
- ~ 40 faculty, 500+ students
- Location: Princeton, New Jersey
- Library with one of the largest theological research collections in the world:
  - over 1.2 million books & other resources
  - archival treasures, incl. most complete set of Dead Sea Scroll photographs in the world
  - 2nd largest collection of Puritan writings in the United States
  - extensive Latin American theological collection

Six degrees

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<th>Master of Divinity</th>
<th>Master of Theology</th>
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<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<td>M.Div./M.A. Dual</td>
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New Methodologies Create New Opportunities

Ithaka S+R’s 2016 Research Support Services Project on Religious Studies

First discipline study to use on-site library research teams

18 participating institutions

Support from the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Theological Library Association
Local Research Team Process, 2016

**February**
Attend Ithaka S+R ethnographic research training held at Butler Library, Columbia University

**March-April**
Conduct in-depth, one-on-one, on-campus interviews (later transcribed & coded) with 9 faculty

**December**
Publicly debut local report (completed August 2016) alongside Ithaka S+R national report
Local Value of Discussions Near and Far: 5 “Early Stage” Local Benefits

- Communicative Opportunities
- National Studies Speak to Stakeholders
- National Studies Provide Helpful Objective Distance
- Externally designed studies ask questions local librarians might not ask
- Library staff training enriched in multi-institution setting
Practical Implications

✓ Link to, customize, repurpose large scale national studies in their own context.

✓ Rich potential for collaborative ongoing work in assessment at the discipline level.

✓ Urge high profile national research projects to “build in” mechanisms for local engagement.
Thank you!

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