Research Support Services
Department of Religion
Rice University

Ithaka S+R Local Report

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Introduction

Over the past few years, Ithaka S+R has studied the research practices of scholars in many different fields, including history, art history, and chemistry. Library teams at universities and other organizations are assembled and brought together to be trained in ethnographic methods to gather data. These teams then return to their institutions and recruit academics in relevant departments for semi-structured interviews on their research practices. One of the focuses this year is the religious studies discipline.

Elka Tenner and Amanda Thomas, both librarians at Fondren Library, make up the religious studies research team at Rice University. They attended a workshop at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology on ethnographic research methods in January 2016, then conducted interviews with faculty in Rice University’s Department of Religion and affiliated departments over the spring semester of 2016.

Qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts was then analyzed, coded and organized into core themes. Along with this local report specific to Rice University’s Department of Religion, a national report will be published by Ithaka S+R in December 2016. These reports both provide detailed descriptions of the research and publishing practices of religion scholars, along with recommendations for how libraries and other organizations can best support their work in the future. While this report is specific to the religion faculty at Rice University, Ithaka S+R will focus on broad, universal themes relevant to departments, schools and seminaries across the country.

Scope of Religious Studies at Rice

Rice University’s Department of Religion consists of 13 full-time faculty, one adjunct professor, and four affiliated faculty (Professors of Anthropology, Philosophy and Sociology). The department has a broad range of research interests and teaching topics, including (but not limited to): African and African American religions, Buddhism and Buddhist thought, ancient and modern Judaism and Christianity, colonial and modern Hinduism, religion and psychology, and modern American religions.

There seems to be a special emphasis on the more uncommon or unknown aspects of many religions within the department, with studies in apocrypha, mysticism and Gnosticism being quite common among faculty. The methods and approaches used by members of the department toward religion are historical, literary, philosophical and social-scientific.
The department offers a certificate program in Gnosticism, Esotericism, and Mysticism (GEM) which provides students with a theoretical framework in the often marginalized, more esoteric elements of religion. The goal is to include diverse voices from religious traditions, as opposed to focusing on orthodox traditions. There is also an interdisciplinary program at Rice in the Study of African American Religions, which brings together faculty from the departments of Religion, History, Sociology and English that are concerned with the impact and development of African American Religion in the United States. The program has a broad focus and there are currently about 11 graduate students affiliated with this program.

The department also hosts the Religious Studies Review (RSR), a publication for short reviews and longer review essays for most of the main religious studies publications. There are undergraduate and graduate degrees in religion available at Rice, with 38 current graduate students. While there are some junior faculty members, the majority have been at Rice University for quite a while.

**Scope of Report**

This report will focus on four findings:

1. The departure from peer-reviewed articles for many religion faculty in favor of books and other types of publications
2. The international network of scholars with which religion faculty work and collaborate
3. The challenges of both the sciences and declining interest and funding in the humanities
4. The lack of adequate indexing and transliteration resources for humanities scholars

An explanatory detail: throughout the report, informants are referred to as “religion scholars,” “religion faculty,” “scholars,” “informants” or other related identifiers. These referents include two affiliated faculty members from other departments.
**Methodology**

Like earlier Ithaka studies, this study relies on interviews of current faculty. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) was used by all of the institutions participating in the study. This allowed for systematic collection of data across all institutions.

From February until April, Elka and Amanda interviewed various faculty members in the Religion department. We sent a personalized email to each full-time faculty member, including affiliated faculty, but excluding adjuncts, graduate students, and post-docs. Most of the faculty responded affirmatively to our request, however there were a few who choose or were unable to participate. In all, eight (8) interviews were conducted and recorded. As we asked to photograph their offices, all the interviews were conducted there. The photographs were used to further assess their research and study habits. We were careful to exclude photographing any personal items that would identify them. All interviews were audio recorded, then sent to a designated transcript company that transcribed and returned the transcriptions to us.

The semi-structured interview was used to ensure the collection of similar data while allowing each participant leeway for their individual insights, research methods, and challenges. These open-ended questions gave us a chance to clarify responses or probe for examples. Time for each interview was limited to one hour; however, some sessions went longer while others concluded their remarks in 30-45 minutes. In addition, each interviewee signed an IRB-approved consent form (Appendix A) allowing us to record and to archive their remarks.

Upon receipt of the transcriptions, the interviews were individually coded using an open code format. We then grouped and ordered the open codes to develop and extract core themes. The codes were then re-sorted and re-read to create focused codes. The core themes would be developed to reflect:

1. Representations of large amounts of data
2. Underlying or re-current patterns of activity
3. Significance to the informants
4. Relationship to other apparent themes
5. Key issues to this institution and relevant fields (libraries, religious studies, etc.)

Next we re-read and gathered together codes relevant to our themes. This allowed us to further refine our codes and sort them under the relevant themes. Care was taken to identify the source of the code without identifying the name of the informant.

This report exclusively reflects our institutional findings reflective of our scholars’ needs. It is made public and will be archived in our institutional repository. Along with the reports of other participating institutions, it will form the basis of the final, national report to be released December, 2016.
Findings

Finding 1: Departure from Peer-Reviewed Publications

Although many humanities scholars will publish more as their careers progress, this seems to be strikingly true in the Religion department: faculty are likely to opt out of peer-reviewed publications in favor of books (including trade books), articles or chapters by invitation, or websites/blogs.

Books as the Primary Publishing Format

Like most in the humanities, publishing books is one of the primary avenues through which the Rice scholars distribute their research. Several scholars commented that they more frequently published articles earlier in their career, but after being awarded tenure their focus shifted to longer form publishing, specifically books: “I work on books. I don’t write journal articles.”

Reasons for this were varied.

Peer Relationships

Many scholars reported that they were invited to publish in collections edited by other scholars known to them. “I tend to publish more in books, edited volumes… the reason for that isn’t because I don’t like publishing in journals… but I get asked to do a lot of things now by other people for their projects.” And, similarly, “If I’m not doing my own edited volume or a book and just writing a paper, I increasingly do that at the invitation of someone who’s putting together a collected volume. So I do increasingly more book chapters rather than journal articles.”

This trend might well be caused in part by the fact that the scholars interviewed were mainly well established; all of our interviewees were tenured and many were advanced in their careers.

Financial Incentives and Trade Books

One scholar commented on the monetary benefit of publishing books as opposed to writing peer-reviewed papers: “I hate to say it, but this is true, you get more money for books than you do for articles.”
Trade, or popular press, books are on the minds of several faculty members in the religion department. Of the scholars interviewed, about one quarter of them were represented by a literary agent. One additional scholar was working on their first trade book at the time of their interview. Since the motivation behind publishing for popular presses can vary from having a larger audience, to financial, to interdisciplinary interests, there were a great number of reasons and thoughts around this practice in the department. It certainly seems to be more prevalent in this department than others around campus, and frequently came up in discussion as either a foil to their practices or a description of current practices or interests. Whatever the reason for its prevalence in the department, the focus on trade books obviously competed with any interest in continuing to write articles for peer-reviewed publications.

One scholar discussed in detail the idea of crossover trade books: books that are marketed in both academic and trade markets, with the assumption that readers will have a base level of knowledge in the subject matter: “My strategy… is to write my really academic work, get that published in some kind of academic venue like an edited volume for somebody or a festschrift or a peer review journal and then take that and use it as a basis for a more publicly accessible book.”

Of course, this attitude was not universal, and other scholars reported that they are content to publish in strictly academic venues: “…I’m very happy with my audience of 50.”

Some were more likely to write for online magazines, websites or blogs than to publish in an academic journal, due in part to their agent’s preferences and ability to negotiate terms easily. One scholar credited their evolved publishing practices to their literary agent: “The other reason I don’t publish [journal articles] is because I have an agent. She gets upset if I work for free. So having an agent changes how you think about writing, and what you write, and who you write for.”

**Lack of Zeal for Open Access**

One advantage of some venues for peer-reviewed articles is that they are open access (though of course this is not universal). It did not seem that this lure was very strong to the Rice scholars, however.

Even though open access was mostly supported, far more scholars mentioned submitting work to Academia.edu than Rice’s open-access institutional repository, known as the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive. One scholar was unsure of the legal implications when it comes to submitting papers to the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive (institutional repository): “I’ve never figured out the legalities of it. It’s very complicated. So I’ve never tried.” Reasons for preferring
Academia.edu included seeing other suggested papers on related topics, being able to keep up with new publications through email alerts, and ease of uploading publications.

One informant was neutral on the subject of open access publishing. Though they had published in open access journals in the past, it was more of a coincidence that they had done so than anything else: “[The motivation was] quality of the journal, not specifically that they were open.” This seems to be rather common; most scholars are not against open access, especially if it is simple to comply and there are no negative consequences.

One scholar chose not to opt in to making their work open access because of cost: “I publish with [publishers] that offer an open access option but I’ve never done it… In those cases it costs a lot of money to do it, and I don’t feel like doing it… Even if [my work] was open access, I don’t think that many more people would see it.” There are some publishers that will shift the cost of making a publication open access to the authors, and in these cases it seems that religion faculty are unlikely to be interested, for good reason.

Just one scholar had strongly favored open-access publication: “I believe in open access. I have no difficulty with it whatsoever.”

This scholar had published a 100-page excerpt from their most recent book in an open access journal, along with making various publications available online to researchers who asked for access or more information at various times. This was on the more permissive end of the spectrum for religion scholars.

In conclusion, Rice scholars were drawn mainly by social ties and financial incentives to modes of publication other than the peer-reviewed article.
Finding 2: Isolation of Rice Religion Scholars

Rice religion scholars seem to be rather isolated at the university when it comes to their areas of research. Few mentioned collaborating with Rice colleagues or consulting them for advice, and far more describe working with scholarly networks around the world. This latter has often been described as the invisible college. Crane’s (1972) description of this phenomenon as “a communication network of a subgroup of researchers within a research area” is still apt today, though the methods of communication have changed over time.¹

Rice Network

Many scholars reported that their work did not intersect in meaningful ways with others in their department, or even in their geographic area, so they work with those that specialize in their research areas despite being far from each other geographically.

There could be a variety of reasons for so many faculty members relying on this international network over their neighbors: the existence of very few colleagues with overlapping areas of research in this small department is one likely reason. Perhaps a larger department of 25 scholars at a Catholic university would inspire much more collaboration among faculty than those in settings similar to Rice University’s relatively small Department of Religion.

However, in the case of one scholar, their colleagues at Rice were valuable resources: “If there’s an area that I’m not really familiar with, I try to find a colleague here in the department who is more familiar with that area and then I’ll ask them… for books I should go start reading to kind of get up on whatever that new area is.” But even in this case, the scholar found colleagues to be helpful for first steps and not for collaboration or exchange of working drafts of scholarly writing.

Mediated Communication to Overcome Isolation

Scholars addressed their isolation by reaching out to others in networks found elsewhere. Some common forms of collaboration or communication with these networks include: asking around their network for sources or information on specific topics and getting suggestions from colleagues informing their work. Email was the main mode of communication discussed, and Dropbox was mentioned as a collaborative tool. Skype also came up once.

One scholar, characteristically, reported:

I work sort of on the fringes of biblical studies; the colleagues I have who work in my field are far away. There’s an international group of people. Nowadays in my discipline these scholars are very well organized in the sense that we meet at conferences. We bring our volumes together… Just this morning I had an email exchange with a colleague in Norway… about a conference that will happen in May in Milan… It sounds sort of unusual but it’s not. You wouldn't find anybody at Rice or in Houston or in Texas who works in this field.

Faculty may both contact others and receive new information from readers or fellow researchers in specific areas: “I’ve had opportunities where I will read somebody and it’s really interesting, I would just email them and suddenly something is born out of that.”

Similarly, another scholar found that after publishing extensively on a specific topic, people will contact them with new information and sources: “I have enough stuff out there now, enough published stuff that what’s happening now is people are reading that and then writing me. And saying, ‘did you know about this?’ ‘Did you know about that?’ ‘Let me tell you a story.’ And so I actually get a lot of amazing things just out of the blue from readers.” Once a researcher is well established in a niche area, it seems that the work of tracking down new contacts for new information is simplified.

**In-person Communication**

Scholars also addressed their isolation by meeting up at conferences, hearing from audience members about new sources or topics that were sometimes transformational, and simply being around colleagues in social settings to generate new ideas.

Religion faculty stressed the benefit from meeting up with colleagues at conferences. Along with the previous informant that plans to meet up with colleagues in Milan, and several others that mentioned conferences as being very important for keeping up (including interacting with other scholars in their areas, but also just looking at the programs and book exhibits), Rice University’s Department of Religion hosts a conference each year on a different topic in the discipline. This provides many benefits to the faculty here: “We have the great fortune of actually having conferences of our own. And that’s a whole different thing, you can actually just… bring people you really want to talk to.” Hosting an annual conference seems to be quite a boon to religion scholars, especially those that study the conference topic(s).

Others benefit from serendipitous suggestions from far-flung colleagues that can change the direction of their research entirely. One scholar talked about being able to connect disparate manuscripts across several archives in Europe and the United States that had not been studied together before: “We didn’t put these two facts together in this way right away, but it was
suggested to us by a colleague… when we described them to this colleague, he said, it sounds like this book… It sounds kind of similar.”
Finding 3: Declining Interest and Corresponding Lack of Funding

Among the many themes spoken about by our informants, none failed to mention the declining interest in religious studies and the humanities in general. There are several interlocking elements to this theme, a) reduction in funding in higher education, b) disinterest by students, reflecting a more secular society, c) general distrust of religious studies as proselytizing, and d) general distrust due to the use of non-scientific methods. The humanities in contrast to the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), are seen as less relevant, not job-oriented, or simply dismissed as an attempt to convert students to a particular religious view. Let us look at these trends individually.

Reduction in Funding

With the general decline or outright reduction for state supported colleges and universities, faculty research is more dependent than ever on grants or corporate sponsorship. The Humanities attracts far fewer grants and poorer endowments than STEM disciplines. To counteract the decline in resources, Rice University has sought to capitalize on its proximity to one of the world’s premiere medical centers by building the Biosciences Research Collaborative to foster such an effort. Furthermore, several academic departments in the humanities are being eliminated, reduced, or combined with other departments. At Rice University, the Modern Languages department has had the number of languages taught eliminated (e.g. Italian and German) and has merged language studies into area studies such as the new departments of Spanish, Portuguese & Latin American Studies and the Classical & European Studies Department. Nor have they had an increase in the number of faculty. The general trend in higher education has been more reliance on adjunct or part-time faculty in an effort to reduce personnel costs.

Science fields, professional schools (medicine, law) and business schools are perceived as fueling the economic engine by attracting more students. The general public is worried about the rapid increase in the cost of that education and is pressuring universities to be a training ground, a place to learn the skills in order to land a good job. They want to see an economic justification to off-set the costs of education. Universities have little choice but to reduce “less relevant” offerings in order to acquire more expensive expertise, equipment, and physical plants appropriate to attracting the best and the brightest researchers, who will in turn attract more and highly qualified students in order to sustain the monies spent. As one participant put it, “I think the university as a whole assumes a kind of materialist model of everything.”

Most of the faculty members rely on networking and connecting with other scholars, primarily by attendance at conferences. Unfortunately, it is limited by the amount of travel funds available. The decline in funding is particularly detrimental to religious studies faculty who may only be able to attend one or two conferences a year. Self-funding of participation is hampered by the lower salaries commonly seen in academic institutions. Of course, the increased use of
email has made communication over long distances easier. However, conferences are also a steady source of new developments, serendipitous meetings and cutting edge research in the field which could be missed using email alone. Membership on the editorial board of a journal does allow them to see some of this new research.

**Disinterest of Students**

In an increasingly secular society, the interest in religion has declined as a result of disillusionment with traditional religions while acknowledging the wisdom found in all the world’s religions. This has fostered a decline in the number of students entering the field and a suspicion of the religious dogma, ideologies, rituals and hierarchies of any individual religion. This shift is sometimes referred to as the spiritual-but-not-religious movement and is often associated with an interest in Gnosticism, esotericism and mysticism. In March 2016, Rice University hosted a symposium with scholars from across the country speaking on different aspects of this topic.

**Misunderstanding of Religious Studies**

As one professor said, “So then coming to religious studies, there I think there’s a misperception out there that we’re really trying to proselytize.” In reality, religious studies are analytical, comparing and contrasting trends among religions, developments within a religious community, and the connection between religion and society. In that sense, they are more closely aligned with the study of social changes. As put by one researcher “People don’t understand that the study of religion is actually… sometimes a dangerous discipline. Probably the most fraught discipline on campus in terms of the politics…” and that “…they think we’re here… to support everybody’s religious beliefs…”

**Non-Use of Scientific Method**

Lastly, the field of religious studies does not use the scientific method, which is seen as the foundation of knowledge and considered neutral and objective. Some faculty do incorporate certain aspects of scientific methodology, but as one professor put it, “That’s the big challenge I think. How not to fall into the models of the sciences because they are so powerful and so useful. But at the end of the day they don’t explain us.”
Finding 4: Difficulty in Searching for Relevant Sources

Again, there are many interlocking elements to this theme. They can be briefly described as a) a lack of adequate indexing, b) distrust of various search engines (electronic algorithms), c) the lack of consistency in transliteration of non-Roman alphabets, d) the lack of translations of some texts into English, and e) difficulty in tracking down and acquiring primary materials.

Indexing/Search Engines

A number of participants spoke to the issue of indexing and search engines. One participant probably stated it best:

I would love to have a magic wand that would find all the relevant material for the topic I’m working on without having to figure out what the keywords are. …but I can’t figure out exactly how to get that through searches. I never seem to get the right stuff. …I would love to have a way of getting really good results on searches…Either the database is wrong or the structure of the search is just not something I’m very good at…

Transliterations

Other participants whose work depended on translating traditional texts, complained about the lack of a standard for transliterating non-Roman alphabets into English. Explained one participant, “The way in which the Greek alphabet was been standardly transcribed in libraries is profoundly not the way it’s transcribed in scholarly writing and that’s tricky.”

This issue may further be complicated when relying on graduate students who may lack the familiarity with different transliteration systems currently in use. As if challenging local systems wasn’t enough, searching on an international scale exponentially increases the difficulties involved.

Translations

Translations can also be problematic. One scholar relied on their own translation of a foreign language text and created a firestorm of condemnation from religious authorities and was even debated in the legislature of one country. It’s often difficult to find translations of obscure texts for classroom use thus hampering the ability to teach.
Conclusion

Rice University is a well-respected, private research intensive university. It was founded to foster the sciences and engineering, which remain the dominant departments, enrolling approximately 4,000 students while enrollment for humanities and social science majors are roughly half that number. The religion department has 13 full-time members, each one with a different, unique specialty. Contact with other scholars engaged in similar studies necessitates reaching outside the institution through email, conferences or personal relationships. Colleges are being held to account for their usefulness versus their cost. The business mindset currently in vogue places little value on the university as a promoter of human development.

It is understandable, then, why so many are concerned about about funding reduction in travel monies, grants, or even the possible loss of faculty. In addition, the age of electronic dissemination of knowledge has made some suspect of open, digital publishing venues, especially when it comes to books. Books are the heart of dissemination in the field of religious studies. The usual trajectory is for younger faculty to write articles for tenure purposes and then move onto monographs, as their accumulated experience is best expressed in a longer work. As one person put it, scientists are rewarded for work done in their early research years, while in the humanities rewards come from years of study.

Communication with a broad audience is held out as one antidote to counteracting the challenges of business and science on the humanities. Faculty pointed out how rarely experts in religion appear in newscasts or talk shows where an objective point of view may help to better understand such global movements such as Islamic radicalism. Nor is their knowledge and opinion sought to help understand new social movements such as spiritualism without reference to any specific religion. Communication suffers when scholars write only for scholars. One researcher in our study is attempting to write his first monograph targeting a popular audience. He pointed out how scholarly publishing is meeting their financial challenges by producing more trade-like publications; but this trend remains far behind especially in comparison with such disciplines as physics, astronomy or biology.

Some professors lamented the turn to digital publishing. They are suspect of electronic delivery as changing human cognitive ability. The algorithms used to retrieve the data are inadequate or time-consuming to use. Current indexing is inadequate, as each indexing source is free to use its own terminology and lacks the level of precision desired. Researchers may need to make repeated searches in a database(s) to cover all the possibilities and may retrieve too few or too many hits.

Additionally, there are the issues of standardization in transliterations and lack of English language translations of some primary materials. Time, even with help from graduate students, is limited thus tracking down materials can be time consuming.
The field of religious studies is facing significant challenges. Responding to these challenges is difficult due to the reasons stated above. It is hoped that exposure to a greater spectrum of readers, explaining themselves and the field more broadly and using their expertise to explain current social phenomena will revive the interest and relevance of their discipline. With a new understanding, religious studies will succeed in securing the financial resources they need.
Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form for Participation in Research

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide
Study Title: Research Support Services for the Field of Religious Studies

Principal Investigator: Debra Kolah, UX Office, Fondren Library dkolah@rice.edu (713) 348-2350

Other Investigators:
Amanda Thomas (Fondren User Experience / Public Services Librarian)
Elka Tenner (Religious Studies Bibliographer)
Danielle Cooper (Ithaka S+R Analyst)

Purpose of this Study:
This study seeks to examine the research practices of academics in religious studies in order to understand the resources and services these faculty members need to be successful in their teaching and research.

Procedures:
Your participation in the study involves a 60-minute audio-recorded interview about your research practices and support needs as a religious studies scholar. We may also take photographs to document your work space; however, you will not appear in the photographs. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the interview at any time for any reason.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Subjects may experience benefits in the form of increased insight and awareness into their own research practices and needs.

How your confidentiality will be maintained:
If you choose to participate, your name will not be linked to your interview responses or work space photographs at any time. We will not include your name on any of the interview data and there is no link between the consent form and your responses.

Ending the Your Participation:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with Rice University.

Confidentiality:
By participating in the study, you understand and agree that Rice University may be required to disclose your consent form, data and other personally identifiable information as required by law, regulation, subpoena or court order. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be maintained in the following manner:

Your data and consent form will be kept separate. Your consent form will be stored in a locked location on Rice University property and will not be disclosed to third parties. By participating, you
Consent Form for Participation in Research

understand and agree that the data and information gathered during this study may be used by Rice University and published and/or disclosed by Rice University to others outside of Rice University. However, your name, address, contact information and other direct personal identifiers in your consent form will not be mentioned by Rice University in any such publication or dissemination of the research data and/or results.

Optional Permission:
I understand that the researchers may want to use a short portion of any video or audio recording for illustrative reasons in presentations of this work for educational purposes or to teams that develop services for religious studies academics.

☐ YES  ☐ NO  (Please initial here ________)

At the conclusion of the study, photographs and video recordings may be archived in Woodson Archives at Fondren Library with your permission.

☐ YES  ☐ NO  (Please initial here ________)

Right to Ask Questions & Contact Information:
If you have any questions about this study, you should feel free to ask them now. If you have questions later, desire additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation please contact the Principal Investigator by mail, phone or e-mail in accordance with the contact information listed on the first page of this consent.

If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant; or to report objections to this study, you should contact Melinda Cotten, Director of Office of Research Compliance, at Rice University. Email: cotten@rice.edu or Telephone: 713-348-6200

By signing below, you agree that the above information has been explained to you and all your current questions have been answered. You understand that you may ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of the study and in the future. By signing this form, you agree to participate in this research study.

__________________________________________  ______________________
PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE  DATE

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above individual and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of participation in the study. Any questions the individual has about this study have been answered and any future questions will be answered as they arise.

__________________________________________  ______________________
SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT  DATE
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Research Focus

1. Describe your current research focus. [How this focus is situated within the broader religious studies discipline]

2. Describe how your research is situated within the academy. [Probe for how they position themselves in relation to religious studies and theology studies and if they see their work as connecting to any other disciplines]

Research Methods

3. What theoretical approaches does your research utilize or rely on? [e.g. social history, political history, liturgical studies, homiletics; or: particular people you follow, schools of theory]

4. What research methods do you currently use to conduct your research [e.g. discourse analysis, historical analysis, etc.]?
   a. Does your research produce data? If so, what kinds of data does your research typically produce?
   b. How and where do you currently keep this data?
   c. Where do plan to store this data in the long term? [Prompt: e.g. an archives, an online repository]

5. [Beyond data (or notes or transcripts) you produce yourself] What kinds of sources does your research depend on?
   a. How do you locate these materials?

6. Think back to a past or ongoing research project where you faced challenges in the process of conducting the research.
   a. Describe these challenges.
   b. What could have been done to mitigate these challenges?

7. How do you keep up with trends in your field more broadly? [Conferences, professional organizations, social networks, etc.]
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

8. If I gave you a magic wand that could help you with your research process – what would you ask it to do? [If they cite broader issues, e.g. lack of time or funding, probe further for coping strategies or workarounds they use to mitigate these challenges when conducting their research]

Possible follow up: considering we don’t have a magic wand, what are your coping strategies? Has this gotten worse over time? How/why/when did it change?

Publishing Practices

9. Where do you typically publish your research in scholarly settings? [Probe for kinds of publications and the disciplines these publications are aligned with]
   a. Beyond scholarly publishing are there any other venues that you disseminate your research? [Probe: e.g. blogs, popular press, classes]

   Possible follow up: If they have a blog or other web presence, how regularly do they update, to what end do they use it, are there specific goals they are looking to accomplish?

10. How do your publishing practices relate to those typical to your discipline? [typical meaning, your department or your peers]

11. Have you ever published your research in open access venues such as open access online journals or repositories?
   a. If so, which journals or repositories, and what has been your motivations for doing so? [i.e. required, for sharing, investment in open access principles]
   b. If no, why not?

State of the Field and Follow-Up

12. From your perspective what are the greatest challenges and opportunities currently facing religious studies and/or theology studies?

13. Is there anything else about your research support needs that you think it is important for me to know that was not covered in the previous questions?