Research practices of scholars in literatures, writing, and cultural studies: a qualitative study of faculty at Rutgers University–New Brunswick

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Research Practices of Scholars in Literatures, Writing, and Cultural Studies: A Qualitative Study of Faculty at Rutgers University–New Brunswick

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Triveni Kuchi*
James P. Niessen**
Jonathan Saucedas***

New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University – New Brunswick
Contact Information: triveni.kuchi@rutgers.edu

* Project lead, Social Sciences/Instructional Services Librarian and Faculty & Graduate Services Coordinator, New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University

** World History librarian, New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University

***Music/Performing Arts librarian and interim liaison to Spanish, Portuguese, Latinx, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University
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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the many constituencies that make up an academic library’s patrons is a formidable task. Scientists utilize resources quite differently than artists, and even scholars within a specific discipline like the humanities may have divergent practices and expectations depending on their academic niche and experience of library services at previous institutions. The authors of this study wanted to examine the research practices of faculty in a particular field, namely language and literatures, to identify what resources and services scholars currently use and wish they had access to at Rutgers.¹

METHODOLOGY

This study of the research practices of language and literature faculty was coordinated through Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research and consulting organization, working in conjunction with the Modern Language Association. Rutgers University-New Brunswick is a Carnegie classified high-research activity institution with 35,000 students. Rutgers is one of the thirteen institutions participating in this research project (see a complete list of institutions in Appendix 1). This qualitative study was conducted by New Brunswick Library faculty: Triveni Kuchi, Social Sciences/Instructional Services Librarian and Faculty & Graduate Services Coordinator, James P. Niessen, World History librarian, and Jonathan Sauceda, Music/Performing Arts librarian and interim liaison to Spanish, Portuguese, Latinx, Latin American and Caribbean Studies. The study was approved by Rutgers’ Institutional Review Board (IRB). Email invitations (Appendix 2) and Informed consent forms (Appendix 3) were sent out to selected faculty in December 2018.

Language and literature studies is a broad interdisciplinary field. For the purpose of this study the field is represented in Rutgers-New Brunswick by seven modern language departments (excluding East Asia, which is covered by another Ithaka study) with 137 faculty. Fifteen tenure-track and tenured faculty were selected for interviews from disciplines related to literature in languages and cultural studies from

¹ The authors would like to thank Dee Magnoni, Assistant Vice President for Information Services and Director, New Brunswick Libraries, for her support of this project.
almost all regions of the globe – Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East, and South America. There was at least one interviewee from each of the seven departments, but no attempt at mathematical representation of the entire population of these departments, within our cohort.

Two participants were at the rank of Professor, nine were at Associate Professor, and three were Assistant Professors. The team conducted interviews between January 24, 2019 and March 28, 2019 in locations specified by the participant (almost all in professor’s offices on different New Brunswick campuses), using interview questions devised by Ithaka S+R (see Appendix 4). The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were audio recorded.

A graduate student from the School of Communication & Information transcribed the fifteen interviews. This graduate student also passed CITI training as required by the IRB and had some prior work experience in transcription, which began February 15, 2019 and was completed on April 20, 2019. The team members reviewed the transcripts of each of the interviews they had conducted for accuracy. They then ensured that no form of identification could be made from the transcripts about individuals interviewed, prepared and transmitted anonymized transcripts to Ithaka S+R at the end of May 2019. The team met after this to discuss analysis of the interview data. We decided to follow the structure of the interview questions to present the findings and analysis of this research. Important and most relevant findings and ideas are explored below.

FINDINGS

RESEARCH FOCUS AND METHODS

Research interest drives everything the scholar does – write, teach, and engage with students and the community. For scholars a research project is a comprehensive and often ongoing interest and involvement (with more than a book as its output). Researchers use this motivation and material for teaching as well as engaging the surrounding and external community.

Personal experiences of the researcher drive them to pursue the study of certain topics or areas. For example, interest in the stories of certain people and communities, and curiosity about certain issues provide the motivation and interest for the
researcher to pursue a topic. Reflection on others’ works, or conversations with community members, subjects of study, and colleagues at work, in conferences or meetings, and graduate school work might also inspire research.

One respondent characterized the study of literary authors as “a hallmark of research in foreign languages and literature,” where there is “a constant dynamic” between the examination of texts and the scholarship and theory in dialogue with it. But this definition of the discipline is itself in dialogue with others. Research interests of scholars interviewed indicate the interdisciplinarity of the field of languages and literature. One respondent said they knew of individuals in their department working “on the image of Asia from Spain, but through art, and music, soap operas, and novels... [another] does ecocriticism...indigenous culture, [etc.].”

Scholars in languages and literature collaborate with colleagues within and across departments for teaching, research, and publication. Yet, despite the interdisciplinarity of the area and collaborative work, scholars pursue unique research paths, some saying that “no one else in my department does research like this.” Others utilized unique methods typical of other disciplines, such as anthropology. Some scholars acknowledge that there are others in their department who share broad methodological or theoretical bases, but their individual work differs substantially.

Scholars use a variety of methods for their study and analysis. They approach the study of individuals and their writings using methods such as close reading, storytelling, narrating, comparing, interpreting, tracing, participant observation, and ethnography. It appears that often the purpose is to draw on as much information as available from oral narratives, a variety of published and unpublished sources, and through different media.

**WORKING WITH ARCHIVES AND OTHER SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

Research in literary and cultural studies is quite varied, and so is the degree of reliance on archives and special collections. The most commonly used category is manuscripts, reported by eight of our respondents. In most of these cases they speak of the personal papers of individuals, either literary manuscripts or correspondence. One researcher reported use of government records in archives, another relied heavily on film archives, and another, works of art in museums. A participant in the scholarly edition of one author’s work paid special attention to early works editions and other contemporary publications, while another studied annotations in printed books as a
source of information about reading practices. Cultural studies scholars often make use of contemporary popular media (film, newspapers, and ephemera) that may be discovered in repositories that made this material a special object of their collecting activities.

Most primary source repositories mentioned by our respondents were in foreign countries, although some were close to our part of the US. Much of the material has not been digitized, so financial support for travel is important. Precise knowledge of the archival collections available may be obtained while planning a trip from printed guides, online finding aids, or email contact, but it often happens that one has to travel to the repository and then discover what is there and what will be useful for the project. Permission for research access also varies from case to case. “...there’s a lot of red tape for essentially something that can be streamlined and made easy for scholars, because a lot of times we are working under tremendous time constraints.”

Research assistants, international collaborators, and technology save many researchers’ time. An international grant enabled student participants in a textual editing project to visit remote repositories and rapidly report their findings, while colleagues in another editing project could examine high-resolution images together on their respective computers.

Our informants repeatedly emphasized the value of the subject expertise of information professionals who had helped them: the government documents librarian who could locate the appropriate guide to the National Archives, the Spanish bibliographer who had detailed knowledge of the ephemera collection in a nearby library, and the museum curator who could locate specific works of art. Better metadata or finding aids cannot supplant the human element in research. In the words of one researcher, “Sometimes you ask [a person] a question and you get an answer you don’t expect. In fact, that’s the best...it’s hard for me to imagine that I would have got the same sorts of information if I had just tried to type something in.”

Although not ubiquitous or consistent across regions, digitization and online access to primary materials has been revolutionary for many researchers. Digital libraries are important for literature researchers, for instance Early English Books Online and ARTFL, but also historical newspaper databases. Researchers would like to see more resources online, ideally with searchable text, but also realize that good metadata, optical character recognition, and human indexing cost money: “The one thing I always want is a full text search...[but] whatever is made accessible, it also consumes a lot of time that you aren’t even aware of.”
WORKING WITH SECONDARY CONTENT

Literature researchers pursue bibliographical data constantly, “that wild hunt through the bibliography citations” as one put it. Footnotes and specialized bibliographies provide specific references that are then sought in the Rutgers QuickSearch database or WorldCat and ordered via interlibrary loan. These practices are nearly universal, but a smaller subset prefers less formal paths to bibliographic awareness: word of mouth from colleagues via personal interaction on Facebook, or searching on Google and Google Scholar, Amazon, or other bookseller databases. Database notification services are mentioned by several respondents. Some literature scholars are also assiduous visitors of bookstores (for new books and old) in the countries they visit.

In contrast, there were only two specific mentions of dictionaries and encyclopedias. The frequent references to bibliographies may in fact have included the unnamed reference publications in which they appear. There is a significant divide among respondents as to their reliance on specialized library tools (the English Short Title Catalogue, the MLA International Bibliography) or instead on freely available databases. A particularly thoughtful respondent suggested that the new information environment may be subtly undermining the traditional training of the humanist to investigate a question painstakingly with tried and trusted tools, and perhaps asking a librarian for assistance: “I feel even that has reduced significantly with the Internet, because now we feel that the Internet will have all the answers, except that the Internet does not have wisdom, right. It has all the data [laughter] but it does not learn...This is why I keep saying that research has become both harder and easier, simultaneously.”

Interlibrary loan services are appreciated and used heavily, but have at least one detractor: “it’s not nearly as good as having copies in the library. It means postponing a question sometimes for considerable time...then [you] have to go back and figure out what it was that you were thinking at the time that you needed this particular piece of bibliography...I think a well-stocked library is a very valuable thing.” The exploration within a physical collection comes up repeatedly, both to pursue specific items as in this case but also to stumble upon connections serendipitously.

Researchers are aware that the ranking of results in the databases they use is frequently not transparent, but it does not bother them as much as one might expect. Perhaps, as in the role of serendipity for on-site research, they are resigned to, or intrigued by, the unpredictability of database searching. One researcher suspected
that *QuickSearch* “privileges...ways of organizing information [that] are really much more useful for the social and hard sciences than they are for the humanities.” In her literary field, she adds, “I want to know what’s out there...as globally as possible.” Literature scholars employ a variety of strategies for current awareness that may include *QuickSearch*, notification services, bookseller databases, and social media.

**SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS AND EVALUATING IMPACT**

In terms of publishing, faculty noted that there are increasingly distinct hierarchies in journal rankings, but the main requirement for tenure and promotion remains the university press book. The impact of having openly accessible online dissertations on the acceptance of a proposed book was a minor concern, even for recently hired faculty. There was some sense that each succeeding generation is required to be somewhat more productive, but many respondents “haven’t noticed a big change.” Although other scholarly outputs such as translations and presentations may not be as important for tenure and promotion, they can supplement a strong portfolio and are helpful for networking.

Analytics software had mostly negative reviews, with all respondents doubting its ability to measure the humanities, especially non-English languages. *Academic Analytics*, the program with which most faculty were familiar, did not adequately count book chapters, had otherwise poor corpus coverage, and was in the words of one scholar “ridiculous.” Their comments reflected a controversy that had been reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Respondents were largely unfamiliar with concepts such as impact factor, relying more on their knowledge of their subject to judge the prestige of journals. One respondent disapprovingly noted that metrics like citation count were increasingly being used for promotion and merit pay considerations.

Social media use tended to be minimal to moderate. Academia.edu was well-known among users and one respondent mentioned an appreciation for the analytics it provided regarding the scholar’s most downloaded paper. Email and Facebook were the most popular methods of staying in touch with other scholars, as well as the

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populations the researcher studies. Facebook was criticized for its problematic search capabilities and poor organization, but its ubiquity and the fact that it could serve as the platform for a variety of scholarly groups made it indispensable for many. In addition to the academic conference, blogs, listservs, LinkedIn, Research Gate, and WhatsApp received some acknowledgment as venues for networking. Several faculty expressed fear of appearing unprofessional on social media as a reason for avoiding it. One mentioned a concern that they might write something in a public forum that would be taken out of context as incendiary. If they expressed something provocative in a book, by contrast, they would have more space to explain their ideas, which would be more carefully considered in that format; rather than “throw[ing] a tantrum” in public they would be exposing the field to challenging ideas.

Interest in pursuing digital projects varied. Respondents noted that after tenure there is much more freedom to explore outputs, including publishing in new journals and digital objects. Those projects could be effective for “popular outreach” and community engagement. One respondent mentioned videographic criticism as a means of putting out engaging, current material since traditional peer-review greatly slows down the time it takes to make scholarship public. There was widespread acknowledgement that digital projects require a lot of technical support that the scholar is unable to provide due to either lack of expertise or time. There is little incentive for these sorts of initiatives in terms of promotion and tenure, so junior faculty especially are discouraged from pursuing them. Individual institutions cannot make changes to promotion and tenure unilaterally because of the importance of external reviewers, so associations like the Modern Language Association are important voices that need to advocate for including outcomes like digital projects in the discussion.

RESEARCH TRAINING

Some scholars had no formal research training, and others trained in certain areas but eventually worked in a different field. For example one researcher had training in African, European, and English linguistics, but teaches and researches women’s literatures, noting “it gives me tools to interpret how I should create a new path for knowledge production. Because as I was collecting data for this theoretical, very mathematical theories, most of the data was coming from either women or children.
And in it I saw, ‘Okay, what does it tell me?’ I need to write about that experience."

Another speaks of his research about a particular philosopher and the group of scholars with whom he writes: "most of them, not all of them, are philosophers by training rather than literary scholars by training...it’s also not what I was trained to do. It’s something that I happened upon as part of, you know, working with this group."

Citing, indexing, and referencing the work of other faculty, colleagues, and researchers builds the standing of the scholar. The quality of research and scholarship is an important responsibility undertaken by the researcher: "It’s very important, and it allows one to also have an honest community of colleagues ... the indexing, referencing, how we do it, is all part of that respect ...when I read somebody’s work, I think it’s the gift that the person gives me. I have an ethical responsibility to take care of it."

Researchers suggest that even with changes in technology and number of information resources, research essentials remain the same: “I think again the fundamentals in my field at least are staying pretty constant, it’s just a question of other tools that we have in addition that...can make research more comprehensive and richer. But the starting points, those collected editions and collected bibliographies, you know, I don’t think that’s really going to change.” One scholar mentions that although software training for data manipulation is important, he finds that prioritizing such training in his classroom does not meaningfully address the analytical and interpretative skills he is responsible for teaching.

Scholars also suggest that library training is important: "I do think that...knowledge is power. So, the more that they can search, manipulate, know how to use keywords and search terms and understand how the things are cataloged. [A librarian] was really good at that in her workshop." Library workshops save the researchers’ time: "...we should probably push students more to take advantage of every time there are these [workshops on citation management]....Because...otherwise you spend a lot of time if you don’t have the right tools...to organize your footnotes, your materials, your bibliography, and so on."

In addition, scholars are interested in library and archives training beyond their institution’s library resources in order to become familiar with the process to access and use such materials: "...if my next project involves more archival research, I will try to get more specific training in that...[T]he University of Illinois will probably be a resource if I’m doing that. I might try to attend, for example, their summer research lab where they kind of train graduate students and junior scholars to do archival research."
Personal Connections and Appreciation

Faculty consider personal connections a very important part of their research activity: “You go into the library and you know people. We used to know [librarian]... And she used to come to the department too.” Another said, “[A]s you know, I’ve been relying heavily on you, to help me...understand how to find these rather unique... documents which are very rarely accessed or used by many people because it’s such a niche area of work here in the United States. Librarians...have supported me and shown me how to go about searching WorldCat, look for archives, get ILL materials for my work...for which I’m really grateful.”

The theme of individual contact arose again and again: “…people in archives, libraries...and different kinds of institutions, I must say have been my real trainer, in terms of research, teaching me how to look for materials, more than professors....So, I think about this a lot when I teach graduate students, because it takes a long time to learn on your own...[when] it’s acquired the hard way.” Another said, ”I think having a personal relationship to the librarian like I have with you has been crucial in...my work here....Just knowing there is this individual relationship that one can have with the librarians, I think that is very, very important.”

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the interviews, we have several suggestions for the libraries moving forward. Cross-disciplinary librarian-led workshops for language and literature faculty would allow librarians to teach about resources and services that exist at Rutgers and elsewhere to enhance research information and awareness. Workshops of this sort may provide a fruitful setting to examine concepts and perceptions that emerged from the interviews. Citation management and journal metrics were of particular interest.

Faculty find that they are unable to prioritize training for themselves or their graduate students on software because it takes away time they need to devote to teach analytical and interpretative skills needed to understand sources. In this regard, there is an opportunity for libraries to provide workshops on topics such as Atlas TI and NVIVO to support the training for non-analytical aspects of research methods.
There is great value in enhanced provision of digital collections, but a tension between the acquisition of skills associated with finite collections and the deceptive ease of reliance on the free Internet. One way to address this tension is to pair the Rutgers contribution to the growth of HathiTrust with improved support for its sophisticated use. The expansion of digital collections and tools may, paradoxically, simultaneously increase the traditional self-reliance of literary scholarship and stimulate new avenues of collaborative work with information professionals like digital humanities.

Another area that merits further consideration is inter-library collaboration. The experience of participating in activities like this very study with other research intensive institutions around the country was quite rewarding in terms of information sharing. Further collaboration could include webinar cross-training for scholars attempting to access research collections of particular libraries and archives. Libraries should continue collaboration to provide access to resources and collections in other libraries in their region and around the world, as this continues to be an important factor for scholars.

The value of personal connections was a recurring theme. It underscored that if the library is to remain relevant, it must recruit and retain language specialists and scholars who understand the research process in their fields. Disciplinary expertise is essential to promote connections with functional librarians in the digital humanities and elsewhere. The intellectual community of the university thrives when librarians collaborate in resource discovery, instruction, and digital projects; serve as affiliate faculty and members on dissertation and thesis committees, oral qualifying exams, and executive committees of centers; participate in academic events and programming such as symposium planning, conferences, exhibitions, etc.

While there have been many changes and innovations to the university and to the library, perhaps the most striking discovery was how consistent the needs and expectations of scholars have been over the years in terms of the requirements of the library, their own research, and their retention and promotion in the university. As more than one respondent put it, while tools have changed significantly, many of the aims and even methods remain the same across the scholarly generations. In spite of many challenges, the libraries remain a vital partner in the academic activity of the university.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cross-disciplinary librarian-led workshops for language and literature faculty
- Training for non-analytical aspects of research methods
- Pair Rutgers contribution to the growth of *HathiTrust* with improved support for its sophisticated use
- Webinar cross-training for scholars attempting to access research collections outside Rutgers
- The library must recruit and retain language specialists and scholars who understand the research process in their fields
FURTHER READING


Appendix 1

Research teams at thirteen institutions with strength in the field are:

1. Brown University
2. Columbia University
3. Haverford College
4. Georgetown University
5. Indiana University-Bloomington
6. Johns Hopkins University
7. New York University
8. Rutgers University
9. Swarthmore College
10. University of Illinois – Chicago
11. University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign
12. University of Pennsylvania
13. University of Utah

Appendix 2

Recruitment for Interview – Email text

RE: Invitation to participate in Research Practices of Scholars in Literatures, Writing, and Cultural Studies: A Qualitative Study of Faculty at Rutgers University–New Brunswick

Dear ________,

Rutgers New Brunswick Libraries are investigating how to best support faculty who conduct research in literature in all languages, culture (e.g. folklore, performance studies, and literary history) and writing studies. The goal of the study is to improve services to scholars like you.

Your perspective would be especially helpful for the study because of your scholarship and research interests in Arabic language, literature, and culture from all periods. Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour interview to share your unique experiences and perspectives?

This local research is part of a larger suite of parallel studies with other institutions of higher education in the U.S. This effort is coordinated by Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit organization specializing in higher education in partnership with the Modern Languages Association (MLA). The information gathered at Rutgers University-New Brunswick will also be included in a landmark public report by Ithaka S+R and will be essential for articulating how the research support needs of scholars are evolving across the U.S.

Please let me know if you would be willing to participate by ________ and we can find a date and time based on your availability in __________to meet for the interview.

If you have any questions about the study, please don’t hesitate to reach out and thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Triveni Kuchi
James P. Niessen
Jonathan Sauceda
Appendix 3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Triveni Kuchi, James P. Niessen, and Jonathan Saucedo, who are library faculty at the New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to examine research practices of faculty in the fields of literature in all languages, culture (e.g. folklore, performance studies, and literary history) and writing studies to identify the resources and services they need to be successful in these pursuits at Rutgers University.

Your perspective would be especially helpful for the study because [specific information about faculty’s research/experiences]. Would you be willing to participate in a one hour interview to share your unique experiences and perspectives?

Approximately fifteen subjects will participate in the study, and each individual's participation will last approximately sixty minutes.

Participation in this study will involve the following:

- Participants will engage in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the investigators listed in this protocol
- The interview will take about sixty minutes
- Interviews will be recorded as audio files
- Interviews will take place in the participant’s office or another private space on the Rutgers New Brunswick campus.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your name, departmental affiliation, courses you teach, research areas you work in. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Recorded interviews will be stored as digital audio files by the principal investigator(s) in a non-networked folder on a password protected computer and these files will be destroyed immediately following transcription.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. The anonymized aggregated data and analysis will also be used towards a comprehensive report written and made publicly available by Ithaka S+R. Ithaka S+R will not will have no access to the research subjects or their personal information. Ithaka S+R will only have access to de-
identified interview transcripts and de-identified metadata about the transcripts, not the audio recordings. All study data will be kept for three years as per federal regulations.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. You will not be offered compensation for participating in the study. You may experience benefits in the form of increased insight and awareness into their own research practices and needs.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact us:

Name: Triveni Kuchi
New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University Libraries
Contact Information: 848-445-5733 & triveni.kuchi@rutgers.edu

Name: James P. Niessen
New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University Libraries
Contact Information: 848-932-6103 & niessen@rutgers.edu

Name: Jonathan Saucedo
New Brunswick Libraries, Rutgers University Libraries
Contact Information: 848-932-9023 & jonathan.sauceda@rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: human-subjects@ored.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) ____________________________________________
Subject Signature ___________________________ Date ______________________
Principal Investigator Signature: ___________________________ Date ______________________
**Audio Addendum to Consent Form**

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: Research Practices of Scholars in Literatures, Writing, and Cultural Studies: A Qualitative Study of Faculty at Rutgers University–New Brunswick conducted by Triveni Kuchi, James P. Niessen, and Jonathan Sauceda. We are asking for your permission to allow us to *audiotape* the interview as part of that research study. You must agree to be recorded in order to participate in this study.

The transcribed data from recordings will be used for analysis by the principal investigators mentioned above. A report of this study may be published, or the results presented at professional conferences using only anonymized data or group results. The anonymized aggregated data and analysis will also be used towards a comprehensive report written and made publicly available by Ithaka S+R. Ithaka S+R will not will have no access to the research subjects or their personal information. Ithaka S+R will only have access to de-identified interview transcripts and de-identified metadata about the transcripts, not the audio recordings.

The recording(s) will include your name, affiliation, and voice only. If you say anything that you believe at a later point may be hurtful and/or damage your reputation, then you can ask the interviewer to rewind the recording and record over such information OR you can ask certain text to be removed from the dataset/transcripts.

Recorded interviews will be stored as digital audio files by the principal investigator(s) in a non-networked folder on a password protected computer and these files will be destroyed immediately following transcription.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) ______________________________________
Subject Signature ____________________________   Date ______________________
Principal Investigator Signature:
_____________________ Date ____________________
Appendix 4
Interview Questions

Research Focus and Methods

Describe the research project(s) you are currently working on.

- Tell me a bit more about the research for the project has unfolded step-by-step [choose one project if multiple were listed above] E.g. developing the topic, identifying and working with the information needed for the research, plans for sharing the results
- How does this project and process of researching relate to how you’ve done work in the past?
- How does this project relate to the work typically done in your department(s) and field(s) you are affiliated with?

Working with Archives and Other Special Collections

Do you typically rely on material collected in archives or other special collections? [E.g. rare books, unpublished documents, museum artifacts]. If so,

- How do you find this information? How did you learn how to do this? Does anyone ever help you?
- Where do you access this information? [e.g. on-site, digitally]
- How and when do you work with this information? [e.g. do you use any specific approaches or tools?]
- Have you encountered any challenges in the process of finding, accessing or working with this kind of information? If so, describe.
- To what extent do you understand and/or think it is important to understand how the tools that help you find and access this information work? [E.g. finding aides, online museum catalogues “do you understand how database x decides which content surfaces first in your searches,” and, “do you care to understand?”]
- Are there any resources, services or other supports that would help you more effectively work with this kind of information?

Working with Secondary Content

What kinds of secondary source content do you typically rely on do your research? [E.g. scholarly articles or monographs]
How do you find this information? How did you learn to do this? Does anyone ever help you?

Where do you access this information? [e.g. on-site, digitally]

How and when do you work with this information? [e.g. do you use any specific approaches or tools?]

Have you encountered any challenges in the process of finding, accessing or working with secondary sources? If so, describe.

To what extent do you understand and/or think it is important to understand how the tools that help you find and access this information work? [E.g. algorithmic bias, processes for creating and applying keywords, “do you understand how google scholar decides which articles surface first in your searches,” and, “do you care to understand?”]

Are there any resources, services or other supports that would help you more effectively locate or work with secondary sources?

Scholarly Communications and Evaluating Impact

How are your scholarly outputs [e.g. books, peer reviewed journal articles] evaluated by your institution and to what ends? [E.g. tenure and promotion process, frequency of evaluations]

Have you observed any trends and/or changes over time in how scholarly outputs are being evaluated? [E.g. shift in emphasis between books vs. articles, shift in emphasis in the extent to which the prestige or impact factor of a publication is considered]

Beyond tenure and promotion, does your institution evaluate your scholarly outputs towards any other ends? [E.g. benchmarking your/your departments performance using analytics software] If so, how, and to what ends?

What have been your experiences being evaluated in this way?

Have you observed these kinds of processes having a larger effect on your department and/or institutional culture?

To what extent do you engage with or have interest in any mechanisms for sharing your work beyond traditional publishing in peer reviewed journals or monographs? To what ends? [E.g. posting in pre-print archives to share with peers, creating digital maps or timelines for students, creating outputs for wider audiences]
Do you engage with any forms of social networking, including academic social networking, as a mechanism for sharing and/or engaging with other scholars? If no, why not? If so,

- Describe the platform(s) you currently use and how.
- What do you like best about the platform(s) you currently use and what do you like least?
- Are there any other ways the platform(s) could be improved to best meet your needs?

Beyond the information you have already shared about your scholarly communications activities and needs, is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know about your experiences?

**Research Training and Wrapping Up**

Looking back at your experiences as a researcher, are there any forms of training that was particularly useful? Conversely, are there any forms of training you wish you had gotten and/or would still like to get? Why?

Considering evolving trends in how research is conducted and evaluated, is there any form of training that would be most beneficial to graduate students and/or scholars more widely?

Is there anything else from your experiences and perspectives as a researcher or on the topic of research more broadly that you think would be helpful to share with me that has not yet been discussed in this conversation?