The Research Practices and Support Needs of Advanced Scholars in Religion and Theology: A Local Report by Princeton Theological Seminary Library

Part of Ithaka S+R's Nationwide Research Support
Services Project on Religious Studies and Theology
Fall 2016

Introduction

During the Spring 2016 semester, Princeton Theological Seminary Library completed a study on the research practices and support needs of advanced scholars at its institution. The study was conducted as part of Ithaka S+R's new national study on the research needs of scholars in religion and theology: Research Support Services Project on Religious Studies. Support and guidance for the project was provided by the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Theological Library Association, working jointly with Ithaka S+R.

Ithaka S+R is a not-for-profit research and consulting service that helps academic, cultural, and publishing communities. This project follows on Ithaka S+R's earlier successful studies of the research needs of historians, chemists, and art historians respectively.

It is the first discipline study in the Ithaka S+R series to include on-site library research teams at participating institutions, and the first to look closely at scholars in the fields of theology and religious studies.

Thus, the library's local contribution to the project is part of a larger suite of similar local studies being conducted concurrently at eighteen participating university and seminary libraries in across the country. The 18 participating institutions include: Asbury Theological Seminary, Baylor University, Brigham Young University, Columbia University, Concordia Theological Seminary, Emory University, Harvard University, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Luther Seminary, Naropa University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Rice University, Temple University, Tufts University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Notre Dame, Vanderbilt University, and Yale University.

The information gathered in this study will not only be used to improve the research support services at Princeton Theological Seminary, but also towards a larger report from the aggregated results to be written and publicly disseminated by Ithaka S+R in December

2016. This national report will provide invaluable insight into the research support needs of scholars in the religion and theology community more broadly. A page on the library's website will host links to both the [local and national reports](#).

This report is organized into five sections: Introduction, Acknowledgements, Methodology, Major Findings, Summary of Findings, and Appendices.

About Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton Theological Seminary, founded in 1812, is the first seminary established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Its mission is to educate leaders for the church of Jesus Christ worldwide, and its more than 500 students and 11,000 graduates from all fifty states and many nations around the world serve Christ in churches, schools and universities, healthcare institutions, nonprofit agencies, initiatives for social justice, mission agencies, and the emerging ministries of the church in the twenty-first century.

A professional and graduate institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Seminary stands within the Reformed tradition. Men and women from across the nation and around the world come to Princeton Theological Seminary every year to pursue ministry as a vocation. Princeton Seminary offers six degrees: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, an M.Div./M.A. Dual Degree, Master of Theology, MA(TS), and Doctor of Philosophy. The Seminary also offers a dual-degree program that awards both the M.Div. and MA in either Youth Ministry or Christian Education. In addition, Seminary students may apply to a Joint M.Div./ M.S.W. Program in Ministry and Social Work through Rutgers University. Women's Studies, the Program for Asian American Theology and Ministry and the Program for African-American Studies in Ministry offer special opportunities for study, fellowship, and dialogue in these vital fields. Approximately 40 full-time faculty members teach at the Seminary; most professors are ordained ministers in their denominations. Additional demographic information about the Seminary is available in Appendix B.

The Seminary is home to one of the largest theological research collections in the world, with approximately 700,000 books and other resources, as well as archival treasures, including the most complete set of Dead Sea Scroll photographs in the world, the second-largest collection of Puritan writings in the United States, and an extensive Latin American theological collection.

Acknowledgements

The library would like to thank Rev. Dr. M. Craig Barnes, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, and Rev. Dr. James Kay, Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs, for their support of this study at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Additionally, we would like to thank all of our faculty interviewees. Though they will remain anonymous in this report, Seminary faculty from all four academic departments

stepped forward to engage with the library on this project. We are grateful that they took the time to speak with us and reflect on their work so thoughtfully. We were inspired and energized by their sincere dedication to their research and teaching.

The team at Ithaka S+R, including Director of Libraries and Scholarly Communication Program Roger C. Schonfeld and Analyst for Libraries and Scholarly Communication Danielle Cooper, provided great project visioning, leadership, and research training.

We are grateful as well for the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the American Theological Library Association for co-sponsoring this work—the first of its kind in the fields of religious studies and theology. We are optimistic that research organizations, libraries, and scholarly associations working collaboratively on project of shared interest will continue to grow from this model.

Finally, we would like to thank the former James Lenox Librarian, Mr. Donald M. Vorp, for his energy and leadership in advancing this study both locally and nationally. Though he is not here to see the final report's debut, his commitment to furthering libraries' role in the support of theological research remains evident in hundreds of ways—the Seminary library's participation in this study is one example of his engaged thinking.

Methodology

Data Collection
The library formed a Research Team consisting of Discovery and Web Services Librarian Virginia Dearborn; Director of Access, Research and Outreach Kate Skrebutenas; and Director of Collections, Preservation, and Assessment Jenifer Gundry. Along with librarians from other participating institutions, the Research Team completed Ithaka S+R ethnographic research training on February 11-12, 2016, at Butler Library, Columbia University.

The Ithaka study was shaped to focus on scholars who spend a majority of their time in research; thus, participating institutions were encouraged to focus on tenured senior scholars when possible. It is worth noting that, particularly in the local context of Princeton Theological Seminary, the Research Team believes that a later or additional study that incorporates early career or mid-career faculty might produce slightly different, but equally compelling, findings regarding research practices and support needs.

Invitations to participate in the study were issued by email to 15 tenured faculty members (approximately 37.5% of 40 total faculty) randomly sampled from the institution's four academic departments. Of the 9 faculty members (approximately 22.5% of total faculty) who participated in the study, the academic department affiliations were: 1 from Biblical Studies; 4 from History & Ecumenics; 2 from Practical Theology; and 2 from Theology.

From March 9 through April 15, 2016, the Research Team conducted the nine (9) in-depth

on-campus interviews with faculty members about their research practices and support needs, including gathering photographic documentation of faculty workspaces.

Interview Protocol

Faculty volunteered to participate in 60-minute audio-recorded interviews about their research practices and support needs as an advanced scholar in theology or religious studies. The semi-structured interview protocol of 13 questions was designed by Ithaka S+R in consultation with an advisory committee, and was used nationally at all participating institutions. Appendix A contains the full interview protocol. The questions focus on four areas of interest:

- Research Focus
- Research Methods
- Publishing Practices
- State of the Field

Additionally, photographs were taken in some (but not all) interview spaces to document faculty workspaces—namely, faculty campus offices or home offices. However, no faculty members appear in the photographs.

Coding and Analysis Procedure

Digital audio files of the faculty interviews were transcribed and analyzed in text form using standard qualitative data analysis methodologies.

Transcripts were first open coded by each library research team member; open codes were grouped and ordered individually. Then, each library team researcher compared open codes to develop and select focused codes to be used across the interviews. Each transcript was then re-coded with focused codes, which allowed the library research team to identify key themes, from which findings were derived.

Ethics and Anonymity Assurance

Faculty interviewees were assured that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, and they were free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the interview any time for any reason. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

Faculty confidentiality was strictly maintained during the research study. Faculty interviewee names are not linked to interview responses or workspace photographs in either the local or national report. No faculty names were forwarded to Ithaka S+R or any other participating institution in any way.

Major Findings

Serendipity as a Research Tool

Focused and enthusiastic researchers

One of the many satisfying insights the Research Team gained from conducting these interviews was how focused and enthusiastic faculty members are about their research. Most are engaged in multiple projects simultaneously. Scholars identified a number of challenges to research and not surprisingly, over half noted the lack of time.

Serendipity

On the other hand, what came through in almost all of the interviews was an acknowledgment of the value of the serendipitous in research. The scholar who travels to Europe visiting rural parishes for resources for which there are no indexes or electronic finding aids has "found remarkable things in the past but it's a bit hit or miss..." And the scholar who travels to India for some of his research reveals, "...it's often just on a hunch that a certain library is going to have [something of value] that I go on. Hit and miss, I'm afraid."

"Hit or miss" sounds time consuming, a drain on the precious commodity that scholars say they lack. And serendipity may seem to be the opposite of focused research, but in a sense, it is a lens that amplifies the focus. Some scholars use browsing (=primed for serendipitous discovery) as a way of keeping informed.

> *"Well, one way that I keep up is to make it a practice to look at our new bookshelf over in the library usually weekly and that's really a great way. We acquire a lot of books all the time but never so many that you can't display all or most on the shelf for a while. So I can go through all those shelves, not only the ones that pertain to my own subject area but others too and that really, really helps."*

That same scholar browses our periodicals.

> *"Of course, following reviews from something really broad like the Times Literary Supplement, the TLS, to any academic journal with a good book review section. That's another way to do it. And what I have done for a number of years, once at least and preferably twice, as soon as the vacation hits I go through our periodicals front to back, the entire thing, and just flip through to see what's out there." The scholar does note a physical limitation: "... of course, we don't display all of the journals we get so there are some limitations on that."*

These limitations were identified in another interview.

> *"I'd like to browse more ... this is to do with our own library. I think one unfortunate side of our new library is that the current journals readings setup is bad. It just hasn't worked. It just doesn't serve in the way the old journals reading room did serve. That may be hardly anybody else's doing, though. I don't know. I mean it's just not a happy solution, if that's the word, or arrangement...Of course, some are then in stacks. There's no indication of what the system is. If you're just wanting to look at current journals, you don't know*

where to go. Of course, it's contradictive browsing. The other thing is I don't know why but there's quite a large number of foreign language journals on the open shelves. I would be willing to bet money that people don't browse those very much. They're taking part of what is restricted space. In the old Speer Library which, by and large, is much inferior to what we now have but in it there was one large journals reading room. I don't know why … It was a wonderful journals reading room, actually, in which all 1,400 journals were there for you to browse. They were kept right up-to-date. We've lost that. I know that most people are working from their desks and not going browsing and so on. I think we spent millions and millions of dollars on a library that is going to be a browsing library as opposed to an online search facility. You've got to make it congenial to browsing. Our present setup with regards to journal superiority just isn't …. I've just stopped going. To go downstairs and find the stuff I'm trying to find … it's very, very uncongenial storage for journals there."

References to "ah ha" moments in the book stacks were unanimously positive, either in terms of library organization or in terms of the benefits of browsing, or both.

"So you keep digging, right. You keep digging. Every once in a while you hit the gem. You find something you didn't even know because you were just digging. For me, it's still why I need to get in the stacks myself sometimes. It's because, you know, you pull one book, but you notice the three other that are next to it, and you pull them down and you sort of look. So as much as we've gone to like digitizing a lot of stuff, there's still a lot of stuff that's out there that we just physically have to search for."

Another scholar says that:

"having a browsable collection has been very important. The way the cataloging works, many times a person's works are all collected together with call number being the unifying factor. There are times when the work is cataloged elsewhere, but for the most part I can just go to that part of the collection and pull down a bunch of books and spend a day looking at some and the next day looking at others, and yet they're all available for finding, physically and visually rather than an online catalog where you have to call them is a very important part to me of the process. Many times the secondary studies are equally clustered together… That kind of browsable collection then leads to other things."

Another says:

"So I really like being on location to tell you the truth. But maybe that's just because I'm the age I am. I still really enjoy looking through stacks and finding a book and then finding the book right next to it, which pertains to what I'm working on. So that's helpful to me."

This being primed for serendipitous discovery is not confined to our library.

> *"[Princeton University] acquires so many new books that there's no way that they can put them onto shelves that you could peruse as you pass through the lobby or something like that and that's too bad but I can go to the subject areas in the library and I can scan, of course, and I can get some idea in a limited section of what's come out most recently."*

> *"I guess it would just be of course using our library constantly, and the university library. Then I've also found that any school at least in my area that used to be an education school like [two nearby institutions], those kind of places they all taught speech as part of the curriculum of training teachers. So if I can't find a book around here, I almost always can find it in one of these previous."*

> *"So I discovered [another university library in the Northeast] a few years ago actually. So I try to go up there for every break and every summer and just purely keep up with what's the latest in the secular field. And then I make the connections myself to homiletics and to worship."*

There was, during the PTSL construction process, conversation relating to the permanent use of an off-site book storage facility to control the cost of the building project. Faculty was unanimously opposed to such a move, and so, it did not happen. Open stack access was preserved and compact shelving installed to provide for growth of an eminently browsable collection. What was not preserved was an easy-to-browse periodical collection.

A Multitude of Sources and the Enduring Value of Print

Scholars Use Wide Array of Source Types and Formats in Research
Interviewees rely on a wide range of source types and formats when conducting research. Traditional primary and secondary sources such as Biblical and theological texts, classical texts, books, manuscripts, archives, scholarly journals, research databases, bibliographies, microforms, dissertations, article abstracts, book reviews, statistical reports, news stories, and personal networks of experts in the field were most commonly reported.

Additional sources included field interviews, multimedia (DVD, VHS), websites or tools (YouTube, Google, Wikipedia), Amazon, digital libraries or projects, handbooks, compendiums, scientific studies from outside fields, live sermons, live performances (plays, musicals), and librarians.

Faculty interviewees often remarked on shifting trends across their careers in their own use of source types and in the discipline more broadly. These trends included not only the rise of digitally based resources and tools as "legitimate" scholarly sources but also the rise of citations from conference papers and journal articles.

> *"The analytical tradition has laid considerable emphasis on dialog and discussion.*

Attending conferences and meetings and talks and so on is a very important element in it. Secondly, although this has changed, there has been a fairly strong emphasis on conference papers and journal articles as a primary focus and source, a bit less so on books. That has changed since I was a student."

Enduring Value of Print

While employing a wide array of source types and formats in their research, researchers were also unanimous in voicing a strong commitment to print. Several interviewees reflected that their dedication to print formats are likely connected to the theoretical approaches and methodologies that guide a great deal of the work in religion and theology. Historical criticism, close reading/literary/textual interpretation, ethnography, and archival research are traditionally rooted in print and manuscript sources. Arguably, such approaches may not need to be tied to paper-based formats now or in the future, but the clear preference for physically engaging with books, manuscripts, and open stack libraries was articulated by each interviewee.

- <u>Open stack libraries for browsing</u>. Faculty mentioned the importance of open stack libraries for browsing, as well as more strategically using the classification system and cataloging links to locate related and new material. Faculty "really like being on location" in multiple libraries; indeed, most of the faculty interviewed reported traveling regularly beyond Princeton to libraries and archives far afield that hold collections pertinent to their research agenda. Some faculty members return to distant libraries in the Northeastern United States, United Kingdom, Europe, and Asia on an annual basis to continue to engage with specialized print collections. Closer to home, faculty report browsing paper monographs on the library's New Books bookshelf and paper periodicals in the Current Periodicals area to locate new material.

- <u>Realistic view of the costly and time-consuming nature of digitization</u>. Researchers exhibited a clear understanding of the financial, copyright, and other resource challenges to digitizing "everything." Perhaps contrary to library assumptions about faculty concerns, interviewees displayed no anxiety about what was and was not currently digitized, and pointed to clear and practical challenges facing digitization, including not just the costly and time-consuming nature of the digitization process itself, but also to related issues such as transcription and OCR challenges that often complicate the usefulness of some digital resources.

- <u>Preference for Reading Print</u>. While faculty use a wide array of digital and multimedia sources in their research overall, a couple of interviewees expressed a preference for reading in the paper format.

    "I actually don't like reading a lot in a digital form. I will read snippets or sometimes a whole article, but I just don't like it. Maybe it's because I'm a baby boomer, I don't know, but there are students that I have who are much younger than I am who also don't like reading extended periods of time online. I just

don't like the format. I like to be able to mark things, to make cross connections, to flip around, and I like the physicality of pages."
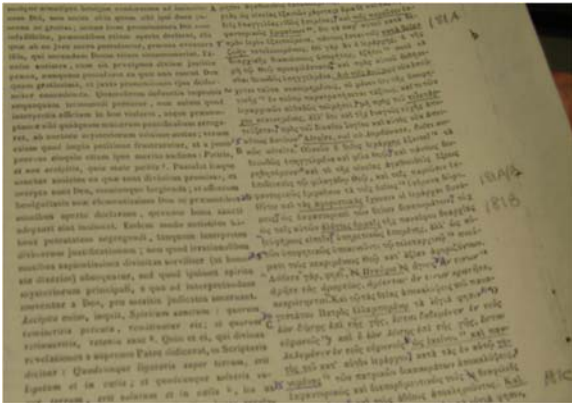
An example of faculty notations in a personally owned copy of primary source material. The ability to engage with a text through handwritten markup is a common practice amongst faculty participants.

All faculty participants reported extensive and detailed systems of office and home office management of their personal collections of paper monographs and printed copies of articles, book reviews, and other research material. Three specifically expressed concern about the perceived instability of digital formats and future access to digital files as a key motivation in maintaining paper files.

*"I do save a lot in hard copy and believe in hard copy for the long run because of the experience that I've had that access to the digital files is going to change, and there might be files saved in one form, floppy discs in the old days, and that **can't be accessed because the technology has changed...I've been more comfortable saving hard copy** for the long run than any other form."*

Faculty manage large size office and home libraries, often highly organized by title, topic, or project.

Many faculty also rely on variety of paper and plastic storage trays, plastic bins, folders, and other containers to store paper by project or topic.

- <u>Ambivalence about digital publishing and open access</u>. A few interviewees have engaged in various forms of digital or open access publishing—blog postings, contributions of book reviews or articles to open access journals, contributions to an open access digital project, or providing direct links to their work via self-curated profile tools like Academia.edu. Most faculty also expressed marked ambivalence about digital publishing and open access. Faculty recognize the importance of digital publishing in increasing access to, and extending the reach of, research in religion and theology; however, most interviewees continue to demonstrate a print preference rooted in personal habit and concerns about digital stability.

> *"I must be honest; I have little interest in making them open access. For a book review or something like that it doesn't matter, but certainly, **if I'm going to spend years preparing a monograph, then just to throw it out there in a form whose archival longevity or durability I can't predict, just isn't acceptable to me. I will always prefer a hard cover book or a printed book or a copy**, I would say."*

Quantity and Quality of Contemporary Scholarship

A recurring theme in the interviews was the challenge to researchers of locating and managing appropriate sources in a crowded scholarly landscape. In particular, interviewees noted that the sheer volume of contemporary scholarship complicates the research process. They also clearly and repeatedly identified weaknesses in the current tenure structures and faculty engagement models of the academy more broadly as key causes of the explosion in scholarly publishing—including the inadvertent fostering of a vast amount of middling quality scholarship, which clutters the field.

Volume of Scholarship

One of the most-cited challenges to the research process is the explosion of scholarly publishing. Faculty report that the scholarly marketplace is flooded with "mountains" of data, which presents practical challenges to researchers both in staying on top of the literature in their field, but also in exploring cognate interdisciplinary areas.

> *"I don't. I can't. I just can't. I have had to focus on my area so that I have had to let go of really being in control of the literature. There's just too much."*

There simply isn't enough time, interviewees report, to stay on top of the literature to the degree that they would like. Even when researchers have selected and gathered relevant material for a particular project, the volume of the material creates challenges in terms of coherent integration, analysis, and synthesis.

> *"If I have research assistants available to me, I will ask them to help me in my own reconnaissance of the scholarly literature…It is, as you can probably imagine, voluminous. I'm sure that every person whom you're interviewing would say of their project, whatever it is, the research is vast, with very few exceptions. I then tried to prune it down…You really do reach a limit of overload where there is just so much. It becomes paralyzing."*

Expansion of Uneven Quality Scholarship

Scholars demonstrated a keen awareness of the organizational, accountability, and financial pressures facings institutions of higher education, particularly graduate schools and seminaries over the last two decades. They drew direct lines between these pressures and the structure of the academy more broadly in terms of faculty engagement models and the current tenure practices.

The instability of smaller institutions and seminaries—long bastions for disciplines such as theology, religion, and philosophy—has been illustrated particularly over the last decade by the closing or merging of schools, shrinking faculty, and evolution of online learning programs. These developments have meant that there are more adjunct or part-time faculty positions and fewer full-time faculty positions available within the academy, making competition for positions extremely high. Doctoral students and new faculty are in a race to rapidly accumulate publications early in their career to be competitive for fewer and fewer tenure track positions. Additionally, the drive towards institutional accountability has sometimes included faculty publication rates. The combined effect of these pressures were identified as key causes of the explosion in scholarly publishing—including the inadvertent

fostering of a vast amount of rapidly produced, but middling quality, scholarship—cluttering the scholarly publishing landscape even more.

> *"This applies to people looking for tenure. There'd be much more time and space within which our research could be conducted…**That pressure, I think, has been very damaging in the humanities**. It's actually now very hard for younger people to take their time…**there's quite a lot of material published that is not really of the highest standard and quality because people are under pressure** to get it… you take historical people who spent years, years and years on books and then produced a classic study or something, the world is not tolerant of that anymore."*

Distance of the Academy from the Church and "Real Life"

Each of the faculty participants also shared a concern about the growing distance between the academy and particularly theological education on one side and the Church and wider community on the other. Across the interviews, blame for this disconnect fell on both sides of the divide.

Features and traditions of the academy have led theology to become marginalized and isolated, "a scholarly community talking to itself." Partly, this may be the influence of religious values upon the practice of theological scholarship. As one scholar noted, "[W]e're trained not to promote [ourselves] in any way." Such humility may prevent scholars of theology and religion—and therefore their scholarship—from achieving greater visibility, particularly outside of the academy but also in some cases even simply outside of theology and religious studies. In the case of practical theology, academic publishing may also play a role in marginalizing the field. "[A]cademic presses…tend to think of practical theology as not academic enough and the popular church presses think it's too academic, so [practical theologians often] fall in between the cracks." At standalone seminaries, infrequent direct contact with scholars in other areas of the academy may add to scholars' sense of isolation.

At the same time on the part of the Church, as one participant put it, "there's simply no interest [in scholarship] so the connection [between scholarship and the churches] has broken down in some form." Whether this perceived lack of interest in theological scholarship is genuine disinterest or rather a matter of the scholarship being inaccessible in one way or another – e.g. due to publishing practices, or that scholars "don't write accessibly" – is unclear. The disconnect itself and the changes within the Church, however, are clear to the faculty involved in this study.

> *"Specific communities of faith, traditional church communities and confessions…are changing fairly rapidly at the moment. Some of them are declining…to the point where you wonder if they're going to be around in any kind of recognizable form much longer."*

Broader societal changes were also cited as contributing to the separation of theological education and scholarship from public life. The quantity of information available to us on a

daily basis and the speed at which we are generally able to access and consume it often mean that "we don't have the patience once we find [a] text to slow down and spend months on the same text" – a practice that has great value in the creation and sharing of knowledge. In addition, while the more popular venues in which titles from other academic disciplines might still be gaining a more public audience, the "chances of a major theological work being reviewed…is very, very small." Again, whether this is a sign of a lack of interest on the part of the non-academic public, or the result of publishers and editors selecting against theology (and philosophy) is not readily apparent, but the result is the same: decreased visibility and increased disconnect.

Amidst this concern about the current distance of the academy from the Church and "real life" caused by forces both inside and outside of theological education, the faculty shared their own efforts to connect with a wider audience in order to close the gap. Several times different faculty members voiced a recognition that social and other public, digital media – including blogs, open access publications and websites – are important tools for engaging with more people, especially audiences "outside the academy." This desire to engage a broader readership also ties in some cases to the scholar's own identity as in some way a public scholar: "My work as a public intellectual and a public theologian is largely digital. It's about…media, doing things online, and…television, and about…much larger access."

The global context in which theological education exists was also cited as an opportunity for the field. Scholars of theology and religion have an opportunity to help people outside the halls of academia to build the kind of informed and compassionate community they seem to want.

> *"We live in a world with overlapping cultures where religions and the theological assumptions that underpin those religions…is so important…[that we could be] educating a broader public that wants to be educated…that will simply not accept the stereotypes or the unexamined assumptions about Islam, Judaism, Christianity…that is promoted in popular media."*

Local Issues at Princeton Theological Seminary

One of the advantages of Ithaka S+R's new model of on-site librarians conducting the local surveys is the opportunity it provided for the Research Team at Princeton Theological Seminary to sit down for sustained, in-depth discussions with faculty members—a luxury which time does not always allow during the regular semester schedule. The interview protocol elicited compelling, interesting responses from faculty about their research practices and support needs as individuals in complex and shifting fields—the broader thematic threads of which are described here and will be also woven into a national report by Ithaka.

Naturally, the interviews also touched on some meaningful issues that are particular to the PTS context. This section outlines the local issues that were raised by faculty, including

library issues, technology support issues, and a desire for a fuller relationship with Princeton University.

Library Related Issues

Seminary faculty interviewees had positive feelings about the library's collections and spaces. Researchers appreciate the library's consistent acquisition of relevant new material, responsiveness to faculty requests, services such as inter-library loan, and library study spaces.

> *"I just want to reiterate the point I made earlier about how grateful I am to the library staff for keeping on top of literature as it appears... if I needed a particular book it was acquired fairly quickly, so very cooperative. And I think, as a scholar who does the kind of work that I do, that's indispensable."*

One specific improvement to library services and resources was recommended by multiple faculty interviewees.

- <u>Improve Current Journals arrangement and space</u>. Faculty are frustrated with the present arrange of Current Issue Journals, in which 600 titles are available for browsing in the North Wing (first floor) and an additional 1,400 title are available in a separate location in the closed compact shelving in the lower level. Faculty report considerable frustration at this arrangement and urge the consideration of a consolidated journals space with a single alphabetical arrangement to ensure more efficient browsing and resource location.

> *One unfortunate side of our new library is that the **current journals readings setup is bad**. It just hasn't worked. It just doesn't serve in the way the old journals reading room did serve...In the old, Speer library which, by and large, is much inferior to what we now have but in it there was one large journals reading room... It was a wonderful journals reading room, actually, in which **all 1,400 journals were there for you to browse**. They were kept right up-to-date. We've lost that...I think we spent millions and millions of dollars on a library that is going to be a browsing library as opposed to an online search facility. **You've got to make it congenial to browsing**."*

Desire for a Fuller Relationship with Princeton University

  The faculty expressed a more generalized desire for a fuller relationship with Princeton University. All of the interviewees regularly use the University's library for inter-disciplinary and other research material, including books, journals, and databases. **A few faculty members suggested the benefits of a courier service between the libraries.** Some faculty would like to see more remote database access to University library databases, while recognizing the growth in shared database access that has been made available in recent years. Most of the interviewees attend meetings, talks, and lectures at the University.

However, several faculty members also spoke about the research value of informal discourse amongst both PTS faculty internally and University faculty in currently non-existent shared gathering spaces. Two interviewees specifically mentioned a desire for shared conversation in the University faculty dining facilities.

> *"Once a month [at a previous institution] we had dinners in one of the residential colleges, which brought professors from all disciplines together and it was very stimulating...We don't even have that within ourselves here typically because there's no natural meeting place. What would be ideal and I think would go a long way is if we had access or had dining privileges at the [Princeton University] faculty eating club because that would allow us to have exchange with colleagues over there."*

Technology Assistance and Training Issues

Scholars noted both their own need for additional technology support, innovation, and training, and the importance of research assistants, Ph.D. students, and faculty secretaries in relation to their use of technology in the research process, including locating digital sources, translation, and transcription.

- <u>Faculty technology skills improvement</u>. Faculty are interested in improving their own technology skills, including in the areas of data management, word processing, bibliographic software use, and database searching capability.

- <u>Technology infrastructure improvement</u>. Faculty believe the technology infrastructure at the Seminary more broadly could use improvement, including refinements of hardware and software support and Internet connectivity.

- <u>Future technological developments with research value (beyond the PTS context)</u>. Faculty also imagined future technological developments that could be beneficial to their research, including the improvement of bibliographic software tools in downloading online resources, more accurate and nimble translation and transcription software tools, and greater faceting and results display in major scholarly databases like Academic Search Premier, EBSCO [faculty did not specify which database(s)], and ATLAS.

> *"I spoke a moment ago of the necessity of triage. Press a button, and the search engine vomits out a thousand articles; good, bad, and indifferent, in every language from German to South Carolina Gullah. The magic wand: What in the way the database was constructed might be built into it to help me make more informed and better discriminating decisions about what I most need to read, get my hands on; and what can be safely discarded."*

Summary of Findings

The Ithaka S+R report will incorporate PTS faculty interviews with approximately 200 additional researchers in religion and theology from participating institutions. The Research Team looks forward to learning how the research practices, issues, and concerns that were articulated locally are reflected in the national report. The broad themes that emerge from local findings, include:

- **Value of encountering the unknown –** Serendipitous discovery, whether through browsing library stacks or being invited to write a book, chapter or article, is vitally important to the research process. Libraries need to look for creative ways to enhance serendipitous discovery in digital and physical environments.
- **Tried, true and tangible: a preference for print –** While an increasingly wide array of source types and formats are being used for research, there continues to be a clear preference in the discipline (even among students) for engaging with physical materials – e.g. books, manuscripts, print journals – particularly for the purposes of close reading. All faculty participants reported extensive and detailed systems of office and home office management of their personal collections of paper monographs and printed copies of articles, book reviews, and other research material. They recognize the importance of digital publishing for reaching a wider audience, but continue to demonstrate a print publishing preference for personal and shared long term storage and accessibility. This supports libraries stated mission to Libraries need to balance collections preservation access
- **Volume doesn't always speak volumes –** The explosion of scholarly publishing in religion and theology was one of the most-cited challenges to the research process. The reduction in the number of tenure track posts at institutions of higher education and the fact that the drive towards institutional accountability has sometimes included faculty publication rates have served to intensify the pressure to publish. Unfortunately, in response to that pressure, there has been an inadvertent fostering of a vast amount of rapidly produced, but middling quality, scholarship—cluttering an already crowded scholarly publishing landscape.
- **Desire for dialogue** – This study also revealed a deep concern among faculty about the extent to which the academy has become disconnected from the Church and "real life" in the community outside the discipline, as well as their desire reach and engage with that wider audience.

Recommendations for Improving Local Library Services

Although faculty interviewees expressed positive feelings about the library's collections, spaces and staff, the Research Team also heard requests for two specific improvements to library services the feasibility of which the library is eager to explore in the year ahead: (1) Improve the arrangement of and space dedicated to current (unbound) issues of all journal titles held in print; and (2) Explore the possibility of developing a fuller relationship between the Princeton Theological Seminary Library and the Princeton University Libraries.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Research focus

1. Describe your current research focus.

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

1. What theoretical approaches does your research utilize or rely on?

2. 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)

3. [Beyond data you produce yourself]What kinds of sources does your research depend on?
   a. How do you locate these materials?

4. 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?

5. How do you keep up with trends in your field more broadly?

6. 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]

Publishing Practices

7. 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]

8. How do your publishing practices relate to those typical to your discipline?

9. 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?
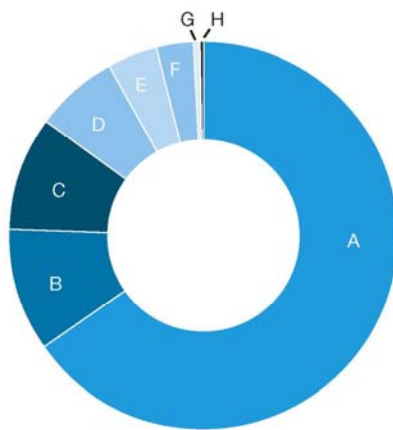
2015–2016 ACADEMIC YEAR

Princeton Theological Seminary is one of ten theological seminaries of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It was founded in 1812, the first seminary established by the General Assembly.

COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY

556

TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

A. Caucasian (353)
B. African American (77)
C. Asian (56)
D. International (33)
E. Hispanic (21)
F. Two or more races (13)
G. Race/ethnicity unknown (2)
H. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1)

32.9% PRESBYTERIAN

ENROLLMENT BY DEGREE PROGRAM

38% (211)   **62%** (345)

Women	Program	Men
156	Master of Divinity including Dual MDiv/MA	248
6	Master of Arts	3
10	Master of Arts (TS)	19
13	Master of Theology	25
23	PhD	49
3	Non-Degree Students	1

ACADEMIC PROGRAM & RESOURCES

39 Faculty

23 Adjunct Faculty

1,270,342 Books and microforms in the Princeton Seminary Library

STUDENTS COME FROM

16 COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES

Canada	Hong Kong	Lebanon	Nigeria
France	India	Liberia	South Korea
Germany	Jamaica	Malaysia	Taiwan
Great Britain	Kenya	Mexico	Thailand

41 STATES 1 TERRITORY