Research Practices of Literature, Culture, and Writing Scholars: A Local Report at the University of Illinois at Chicago

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Introduction

This local report is part of a larger study conducted by Ithaka S+R and the Modern Language Association (MLA) on the research practices and needs of literatures, culture, and writing scholars. Librarians from 14 universities across the United States interviewed scholars at their own institutions and shared these interviews with Ithaka S+R. Ithaka S+R will analyze the compiled data and publish a comprehensive report next year. This current report will focus on the scholars at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Language and literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago

At UIC, the literatures, culture, and writing professors reside in several departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Within the college, the School of Literatures, Cultural Studies, and Linguistics houses French & Francophone Studies, Germanic Studies, Hispanic & Italian Studies, and Slavic & Baltic Languages & Literatures, while English is a department under the College itself. All departments offer a B.A., M.A., and PhD, with the exception of French, which offers a B.A. and M.A. Professors focused on linguistics or language pedagogy, whether they had appointments in the Department of Linguistics or in another language department, were not included as part of the study.

These departments are served by two librarians, one dedicated to English and the other to the School of Literatures, Cultural Studies, and Linguistics.

Methods

After obtaining a claim of exemption from the UIC's Institutional Review Board, the two investigators invited language, literature, culture, and writing studies faculty to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews regarding their research habits, needs, and support. Maximum variation purposive sampling techniques were utilized to determine which scholars to invite to participate in order to capture the breadth of faculty aligned with these disciplines. Eleven faculty members from the English, French, German, Polish, and Spanish departments agreed to be interviewed: four professors of English (two of whom studied rhetoric), two of Spanish, two of French, two of German, and one of Polish. Three were Assistant Professors, seven were Associate Professors, and one was a full Professor.

Each investigator conducted individual interviews, which took place in the participants' primary workspaces on the UIC campus. Participants were asked about their research processes, including developing research projects, seeking materials, using primary and secondary sources, research training, and attitudes toward scholarly communication (see Appendix for interview guide). The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded. After the interviews were complete, the recordings were sent to an outside transcription service.

Investigators created a code book based on the questions asked during the interviews with the stipulation that new codes could be added as per open coding. One investigator coded the interviews straight through, while the other coded according to sections of the interview guide, i.e. all responses to section one first, followed by all responses to section two, etc. After reviewing the codes together, the investigators chose several of the most prevalent codes and coding clusters to review in more depth. Through this further review and discussion, several major themes emerged.

Findings

The faculty members interviewed for this project spoke at length about their research habits, detailing their processes from idea formation to publication. Although some differences emerged among those interviewed, several topics were discussed widely and seemed universally important. We have categorized these topics as 1) disciplinary perspectives, 2) the use of primary sources and archives, 3) the limitations of search and the need for more informal strategies for information seeking, 4) the quantity of resources (not enough vs. too much), 5) the social dimensions of information seeking, and 6) varying forms of training. These major themes are detailed below.

Disciplinary Perspectives

The scholars we interviewed exhibited a wide variety of research interests and theoretical orientations, suggesting that literature and language studies is highly eclectic both in terms of content and method. When asked if their research was typical of the work done by others in their field or department, few claimed much commonality. One said their work was typical of the department but not of the wider field, and another said their work had more in common with the wider field of rhetoric but much less with the English department as a whole. Most professors, however, saw themselves quite differently. Sometimes they saw themselves as unique because no one else had their particular specialization. For example, one said, "[E]verybody's doing their own thing in this department. There's not a high degree of overlap between anybody really." In other cases, they employed an unusual method (e.g., ethnography), saw themselves as less strictly focused on literature (e.g., as opposed to history, cognitive psychology, or political theory,) or saw their home more in a particular sub-discipline or interdisciplinary area (e.g., rhetoric, Jewish Studies) than in a linguistic or national framework.

Indeed, many of the scholars spoke of their work as interdisciplinary. One professor noted that "rhetoric has always been interdisciplinary in its structures, in its concerns and so on." Another professor mentioned that their work has been "consumed and cited as much by people in different fields as it is in my field." Another spoke about the rewards of doing interdisciplinary work: "I'm at the intersection of two fields that have had this chasm between them and I'm trying to create a field of scholars that are bridging that, filling that in, re-weaving a fabric that got torn apart."

Despite this interdisciplinarity, there was still something fundamental that united all of this work under the umbrella of the humanities. Research was seen as highly individualistic. As one professor put it, "I also find, for people in the humanities, that a huge part of doing our work is the craft of expressing your work, and not the finding, the other stuff." Another professor mentioned similar ideas and discussed how they explain the nature of humanistic research to students:

> That's what I always tell my students, that the difference between the humanities and the natural and physical sciences is that you're discovering something that's true, but it's not discoverable without you. If you're studying plants, the plant is always going to be the plant. If you're an engineer, you might manipulate the plant and change it, but you're studying phenomena that empirically exist, but the burden of being a humanist is, "If you don't write this, no one else is going to."

Because of the subjective nature of research in the humanities, the process of framing a topic or developing a theoretical approach was often as important as locating documents or seeking particular pieces of information.

Primary Sources and Archives

The use of primary sources was unsurprisingly central to work in humanities and literary studies, but the use of archives and special collections was variable. About half of the professors interviewed reported that the use of archives and special collections was central to their scholarship. Others used them occasionally to supplement their work with other published primary sources, and one said they did not use them at all. Archives and special collections were especially important to those whose work was highly historical or when the textual history was important (for example, when producing a critical edition).

Some of the common difficulties working with primary sources were lack of time, the need to travel, and discovering what types of sources exist and where they were located (especially for documents that had received scant attention in other secondary literature). Even when interviewees knew which archives might be relevant, inadequate description of print archives and limited indexing or searchability of digitized archives posed a challenge. Finally, some struggled with tracking and managing the extensive notes, scans, and photographs that are created in the course of doing this kind of research.

Of the professors who worked extensively with archives and special collections, most found they needed to travel in order to get adequate access to the sources despite the growth and convenience of digitization, and only one said that everything they needed (primarily historical periodicals) had already been digitized. Although all said they would have been happy to use digitized versions had they been available, even in cases where the sources had been digitized they were not necessarily easily searchable or well indexed. This issue was especially problematic when dealing with sources with handwriting or irregular type that weren't amenable to optical character recognition.

Those that did work with physical archives reported that they could be especially transformative in generating new ideas for research. In other words, instead of starting with a particular issue, they immersed themselves in a set of documents that led them to a question. Of particular importance were specialized collections, where, as one professor commented, "I could walk through and [find] stuff that I didn't even know existed and that were all in the same space." Others described the need for extensive browsing to find a relevant item, "going through years and years of journals" or "you just sit with the microfilm and make yourself nauseous scrolling, until you hit upon something." Quite often, adequate processing and description of archival collections was just as important as collecting them to begin with. According to one professor,

> Well, they have this huge collection and they know that there's some stuff on my topic in it, but it's not organized in any way, so they couldn't even tell me what boxes to look in, let alone folders.

Even when collections were fully digitized and searchable, that didn't solve all the problems, especially in unfamiliar areas. One professor talked about the difficulty of searching for a topic, such as *law* or *justice*, since these terms brought up many documents that were out of scope. In these cases, extensive browsing was required until the relevant authors could be identified. In addition to browsing, historical sources such as anthologies of speeches produced at the time proved helpful in identifying important sources.

Likewise, professors saw a strong need for special collections librarians and archivists who knew the collections well, especially for niche interests.

> The digitization has been a total game-changer for me. But then the one thing for me that's been important is that I have to remember to still talk to archivists because they sometimes know to make connections that I would not know myself because they know their collections.

One difficulty mentioned was balancing the need for sufficient documentation to cite or track down sources later without generating unreasonable quantities of notes. Scholars who were engaged in exploratory research and didn't necessarily know what would turn out to be important or those on research trips abroad found this issue particularly challenging. When asked how they kept track of everything, one professor acknowledged, "That's tough, and I'm struggling with that because of course, I don't want to make perfect bibliographic records while I'm working because then, I'd lose time working."

They expressed a tradeoff between time spent tracking down and collecting sources on the one hand and time spent documenting and note taking on the other. If time was limited, as when traveling, some professors chose to prioritize the former even if it meant spending more time later trying to properly trace the bibliographic information. Another professor described a time-consuming process of determining where the original of a photograph was located and determining where the copyright was held:

> I went to recent books or journal articles [on the same topic] and looked at their permissions. And then went to those people, that were related or adjacent—even if it wasn't the exact images. But I had to send queries to the libraries, "Do you have this image?" So, it was sort of a spelunking expedition.

Although the humanists to whom we spoke did not mention data management specifically, for many professors keeping track of the documents they found or created in the course of primary source research proved to be a big challenge. Professors spoke not only about copious amounts of notes, but also about documents created from collections to reference later: hundreds of scans of books, journal articles, photographs, and historical materials such as diary entries and letters. Much of this material did not have adequate citation information, and it was difficult for many scholars to keep these documents organized.

Limitations of Search and Informal Strategies for Information Seeking

The limitation of keyword searching was another common theme. As in other humanities disciplines, there is little in the way of standardized terminology for many important topics in literary studies and rhetoric. Similarly, literary scholars are likely to range very widely, both in terms of subject matter and time period, so it's difficult if not impossible for a single search tool to cover everything that might be of interest for a given information need. In the absence of this consolidation and bibliographic control, humanists have to rely on a variety of other methods, such as extensive browsing and scanning of the literature, citation chaining, and recommendations from colleagues. Many of the scholars referred to these efforts as a kind of detective work as they described following up on leads, comparing sources, seeking out informants, and relying on the occasional hunch. A complement to this purposeful activity was the theme of serendipity, where scholars just happened to be in the right place and time that led them to a discovery.

Most professors talked about employing a variety of different methods and searching in different places, such as multiple general and specialized databases, browsing the stacks, searching Amazon and Google, and scanning publisher ads in journals and conference programs. Faculty mentioned the MLA International Bibliography most often, but there was a wide range of search tools mentioned, from familiar standbys such as JSTOR, Project Muse, and Google Scholar, to subject and region-specific

databases such as Historical Abstracts, Philosopher's Index, Ethnic NewsWatch, Central & East European Online Library, and Persée.

However, whereas librarians often focus instruction on database searching, professors reported using databases as only one strategy for information seeking, one that was often exploratory. One professor mentioned doing keyword searches in these databases before their project was fully defined, to get a feel for the scholarly conversation. Another mentioned "spending time fooling around and looking for stuff" and that by doing so they found "treasure troves." Others, however, spoke of frustrations with the library databases, especially all the "clicking rigamarole." One found that it was difficult to search for particular topics, either because of imprecise vocabulary or because items weren't indexed or described in much detail. Often, it was necessary to have a proper noun or the name of an author in order to get relevant results, implying that searching is most effective when researchers already have some familiarity with the area of inquiry. According to one professor, "I might think, 'What person has written about X topic?' And the keywords that I might have in mind, might not be the ones that have ended up in a library catalog."

Others noted limitations, either in what was searchable or what was accessible. For example, one had found "certain constraints, where some of our subscription levels to even those top databases, they won't return results to us if I do it through the library portal." Others mentioned library databases that the UIC Library doesn't subscribe to and so they traveled to other university libraries to access them. Yet another stated that Google was often more useful for finding information about newer authors less likely to have been the primary subject of books or journal articles. Several professors used Google Books or Amazon to access snippets of text to see if a book was worth checking out from the library. Many people used combinations of these tools as a starting point to track down citations. One in particular noted:

> I do use [Google] a lot. I use it a lot to determine if I should get a book out from the library, or if I should buy a book. I used to use it a lot to find citation pages for things that I had put in my notes, or put in my draft of a thing, but not written a page number, or not thoughtfully jotted down the citation.

Beyond search, professors highlighted a variety of methods defined more by holistic practices of engaging with their areas of study and collegial networks rather than discrete attempts to address well-defined information needs. Professors discussed how many of their greatest finds took place "accidentally" while they were doing other things, for example while attending conferences or workshops, socializing with colleagues, or reading for other purposes.

One professor described their research as arising out of time spent immersed in sources without initially having a particular question or agenda and relying to a certain extent on chance or serendipity. They described needing to browse extensive collections related to the topic at hand, even if they were only tangential to the ultimate scope, in order to get the full documentary context. This was especially difficult when the major collections are located abroad or required travel:

> I think that in general, with the type of work I do, my challenge in the States is to start the project because I think I do like to have some kind of archival basis to what I do, even though it might end up not being necessary in the final part. But at least it gives me the sense that I have this lay of the land more or less figured out.

This need to browse and read widely is related to how literary and humanities research often doesn't stay within neat categories of subject matter, geography, and time period. One professor discussed how

theoretical sources could be especially difficult to search for in a direct way, and instead it was necessary to rely on citations or tips from colleagues:

> That kind of thing where another reader will tell me what I should be looking for, or I'll go to a conference and I'll hear someone referring to a theory, or a theoretical framework in someone else's paper. If I'm not currently in an existing seminar, or summer workshop, or getting feedback on a paper, I wouldn't know how to look for a theory of sociability that went with my model of democracy that I'm trying to figure out. Where would I even start?

Citation chaining was another common method that professors used to find new sources. One professor talked about getting around the limitations of particular databases by finding one relevant new article and mining the citations:

> I start, usually, with a search on either [MLA] International Biography, JSTOR, Project Muse, or Google Scholar [and] look often for the most recent article I can find, if it really fits with the topic and then hope that that person has already done a lot of this research for me and if I go straight to their sources, either at the footnotes or the very end, the works cited, that I can then start to expand from there.

Overall, professors reported the need to engage in many different forms of information seeking, both on their own and relating to colleagues, in order to explore new areas, stay current, and meet particular needs. Although libraries featured prominently in their activities, they also went well beyond them, to Google, professional networks, and social media.

Not enough vs. too much

Another major theme was the tension between limitations in access and limitations in time. For every instance in which professors described not having access to particular resources or difficulties tracking down certain kinds of information, there were other instances when a lack of time was equally important. Since truly comprehensive investigation requires much more time than professors can generally spare, they had to engage in a series of tradeoffs. One way of addressing this problem was to concentrate on the research they saw as being of highest quality, with professional reputation as a useful proxy for quality:

> The people whose thinking really influences you, you read their bibliographies very carefully. And, since there's way more stuff out there than you have time to [read], you have to kind of accept that you're only going to see a small part of it, and this is the area that strikes you as being the most promising.

This lack of time and the sheer magnitude of scholarly output may explain why scholars noted some of the difficulties in searching but didn't feel hindered by missing out on certain materials:

> I think it's not necessarily actually locating the materials, but in winnowing down what's actually relevant, right? The problem used to be that you had to work with the sources that you were able to get ahold of, and then a very, very small select number of them would actually be relevant and you could run with one or two. And now, with the ability to find everything that everybody's writing—except that one thing that you actually need—[and] really honing in on whose voice matters.

These tradeoffs in terms of comprehensiveness and time may also be related to the nature of literary research and what's valued. One professor discussed the importance of developing new ideas or approaches over comprehensive coverage, which might even detract from a pursuit of originality:

I've never done a systematic bibliography because it's not for me a priority. My emphasis is on new ideas, new theoretical approaches that I'm trying to develop. I don't have time, it's not worth it for me to emphasize making sure that I've found everything that was written.

For the same reason, one professor mentioned not needing to consult with a librarian, since what they had found through their unsystematic searches was sufficient for their purposes. One even described themselves as a "bad researcher" who nevertheless managed to find what they needed. Another commented that they didn't give the mechanics of database searching much thought because they could rely on their existing subject knowledge to get them through:

I've already had enough to do with sources that I know about. In other words, my work at the moment isn't really being handicapped by the fact that I'm limited as a researcher. I mean, I have more than enough material at the moment to keep me pretty confident that working with what I have, there might be more stuff to bring in but I don't think my view point is going to be completely changed by some research discovery that will invalidate it.

Still, there was some support for an exhaustive approach. Even professors who said they did not feel the need to be systematic also said they relied on the work of colleagues who did aim at comprehensiveness. One professor said that they saw the practice of merely "moving from source to source," or following citations without comprehensive searching, as an "unhealthy trend in research these days," and they employed assignments with graduate students that forced them to do an "exhaustive review of the literature" and practice an "economy of scale with secondary sources." Another referred to a reliance on citations as a "fast and dirty way to do it" that can be successful for canonical texts but which is inadequate for less studied authors or topics. Still, most seemed satisfied with more informal methods that lacked comprehensiveness because they felt that it wasn't strictly necessary or they prioritized something else more highly. In all these cases, the sheer magnitude of scholarly literature was recognized as a challenge involving tradeoffs of time and resources.

Social dimensions of information seeking

When discussing their research practices, professors frequently mentioned colleagues and scholarly communities, both online and off. Forming and maintaining relationships was an important part of their work, leading to information discovery, new skills, and collaboration. Although formal collaboration in the form of co-authorship was still rare among the professors interviewed, more informal methods of cooperation were mentioned frequently. Professors reached out to colleagues to find important sources, to learn about a new field when doing interdisciplinary work, to find partners for conference panels and presentations, and to encourage and support each other's work.

When discussing colleagues, professors mentioned both those from their own university, as well as scholars in their disciplines or adjacent fields from other institutions. Several professors mentioned sharing their work with other scholars or suggesting sources and ideas for others to consider. One professor noted, "I'm very collective about scholarship. I'm not at all competitive. I think we should all do our part and then benefit from each other's work." Another professor noted their colleagues' generosity, and their own inclination to help, especially for items that are rare or difficult to locate: "The people are generous. It's interesting. I have not found people protective of their materials." Professors often called on colleagues to help them fill in gaps in their knowledge. One remarked, "I know I have friends who are great bibliographers. I mean they know, and I will check with them periodically: 'Do you know, is there something that I haven't found, is there something extra?'"

Although the use of social media among the group varied, it was one way that some professors interacted with colleagues from other institutions. Some professors spoke of using it extensively for professional purposes, others of not using it at all, and a couple professors of using it occasionally, but with some reservations. Use or non-use was not obviously correlated to age or rank. The professors who used social media mentioned Facebook most often, and used it for many purposes, such as marketing their work, keeping current with the major scholars and literature in their field, and learning about conferences and other events. One professor mentioned facilitating a Facebook group where academics share works in progress and keep up with the field. They explained, "A lot of it is, 'I want to read stuff about this. What should I read?' or, 'Who is working on this?'"

Professors working with literatures outside of the United States and Britain found Facebook particularly useful. One noted:

> [It] has been incredibly helpful for me because there are things that I would not have learned if it were not for Facebook. Sometimes that's where I see calls for conferences or about the publication of the book or articles or some less traditional services like some online news organizations or things that I would not have learned about.

Another scholar was wary of Facebook for privacy reasons, but still found it useful in keeping current:

> I don't like social media in terms of I don't like any information about myself to be in the public, so I never post anything, but in fact Facebook is one of the most important ways for me to understand what is going on in my field. And I would know very little of what I know if it weren't for all those wonderful people willing to post.

Social media has enabled scholars to find each other online and broaden their scholarly communities. Engaging with these communities was an important part of the information seeking process, despite humanists' reputation as solitary researchers.

Forms of Training

Given the complexities of scholarly research and the rich array of techniques that faculty practice in order to stay current with their fields and explore new areas, the question of training—how they learned to do research, what additional forms of training they could benefit from, and what students or new scholars needed to learn—could be vexing. The most common response to questions about how professors had learned to do research was that they had not received any formal instruction. Many professors said they were self-taught and learned along the way, others mentioned informal training, usually through a mentor or colleague, and only one recalled taking a dedicated research course on bibliography as an undergraduate. However, most expressed a need for further training, either for themselves or their students. Interestingly, the types of training they discussed ranged well beyond locating sources, from learning the subject matter and key methods of their disciplines to understanding how to choose which journals to publish in or how to apply for grants.

Learning by trial and error was a common theme in the interviews, often accompanied by a desire for some simpler, more rational process. As one professor admitted:

> I would have loved to have received more training than I got, but it was all trial and error for me. And it was kind of through failing a lot of times that I worked out a research process that produces those levels of scholarship that I want to produce.

In the absence of formal instruction, people reported relying on more piecemeal help, either from professors or fellow students. One mentioned that during graduate school, their own professors "tended to assume that we already knew [everything]" and so it "was a matter of asking friends and then really just getting used to seeing what works with what type of text you're looking for." Another discussed what might be understood as a process of "reverse engineering" from what they saw their own professors doing or from clues embedded in publications:

> I think I learned a lot by having to sit down and deconstruct on my own how someone else set up their argument, and how they must have found their sources, and kind of trying to imagine what the life of the article was before the article came to be an article.

When it came to what types of training they thought would be useful for students or younger scholars, many discussed trying to make explicit the tacit knowledge or assumptions of experienced researchers. For instance, one spoke about trying to teach students to be more reflective about searching in light of how they want to frame their topics, for example by using filters, trying synonyms, and resorting to adjacent or analogous topics when their initial searches don't get results. Another said, "I try with students who are working with me to actually explain why I'm asking them to do things and where that is in the process."

Another important area for training was archival research, both in identifying relevant archives and in knowing how to navigate them and interpret primary sources. The latter was especially important when going beyond an author-centric focus to more historical research. Several mentioned feeling at a disadvantage when doing historical research because they lacked the training they imagined historians received in navigating archives, taking notes efficiently, and analyzing a whole set of documents to draw conclusions about them. Even those who were more experienced reported that archival research was much more time consuming than non-archival research and that the learning curve of archival research had discouraged them from going that route on previous projects.

Finally, choosing journals, getting published, and promoting one's work were areas in which professors saw a need for more training. One mentioned teaching graduate students to understand the "genres" of different journals by browsing the tables of contents of a particular journal over a period of time and reading a few issues cover to cover. According to them:

> [It's important] to figure out what the styles are of particular journal presses. What their house methods are, what kinds of idioms they tend to work in, what niches in the field they tend to support. Because that's how you can get published in those places. Or that's how you can know the best possible journal to send your thing to.

In this and other conversations, it emerged that being a productive scholar isn't just about producing good work, but about putting it in front of the appropriate audience. In order to do so, it was necessary to learn the implicit criteria that come from familiarity, not only with the content of the discipline but also with its communication infrastructure.

Conclusion

Interviews with these eleven professors showed literary studies to be an eclectic disciplinary zone, with a wide variety of research areas and approaches. Practices of information seeking were especially non-linear and open-ended, and social networks, both real and virtual, played an important role. Because of the wide range of document types, subject areas, and time periods that humanists often work with, traditional library information retrieval methods only go so far; these needed to be supplemented by a

variety of ongoing and informal methods to keep up with new developments and identify particular sources or theoretical approaches that were relevant to their current research interests. Although engaging with and managing documents was a key part of doing research, framing the topic or developing a theoretical approach was of equal and complementary importance, and these intertwined processes of meaning making relied on dialogue, formal and informal, with other scholars and with the field as a whole.

Recommendations

Based on these research findings, there are several steps the Library can take to help literature, language, writing, and cultural studies faculty at UIC with various research needs.

Help with data management

Although the research practices of humanists do not traditionally produce "data" in the same way as social and physical scientists, many of the faculty interviewed spoke about various documents and forms of documentation produced when researching, particularly involving primary sources, and several spoke about the difficulty of managing their collection of scans, photos, notes, and annotations. Literature and language librarians can work with the Data Management Coordinator to have a dialogue with faculty about best practices, the benefits of a data management plan, and software or other tools that could help them keep track of their documents and annotations.

Help faculty and graduate students identify relevant archival collections

Literature and language liaison librarians can work in conjunction with special collection librarians to discover relevant collections and learn more about identifying collections in other libraries. Liaison librarians can develop primary source research guides for faculty and graduate students to help them identify relevant archival collections.

Target instruction outreach at graduate students

Liaison librarians can augment instruction for graduate students beyond searching library systems to meet discrete information needs to include developing the information seeking habits that faculty use to succeed. This could include instruction related to publishing as well, since faculty spoke of the need to educate graduate students on identifying important journals, relevant publishing venues, listservs, blogs, and scholarly societies. Although instruction for new graduate students is common, librarians can work with directors of graduate studies to target instruction at students starting their thesis research.

Acquire new interdisciplinary digitized collections

Work with Collections Coordinator and liaisons in other relevant areas to identify and purchase digitized collections of primary sources to support faculty research.

Appendix

Semi-structured Interview Questions

I. 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?

II. 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?

III. Working with Secondary Content

What kinds of secondary source content to 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?

IV. 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?

V. 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?

Informed Consent Form

Project title: Research habits of faculty in literature, culture, and writing studies

Researchers: Carl Lehnen, Assistant Professor & Reference & Liaison Librarian, clehnen@uic.edu; Glenda Insua, Assistant Professor & Reference & Liaison Librarian, ginsua1@uic.edu.

Reason for the study: This study seeks to examine the research practices of faculty in literature in all languages, culture (e.g. folklore, performance studies, and literary history) and writing studies in order to articulate the best resources and services that UIC faculty need to be successful in their work.

What you will be asked to do: Your participation in the study involves an audio-recorded interview (lasting approximately 60 minutes) about your research practices. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the interview at any time for any reason.

Benefits and Risks: There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. You may experience benefit in the form of increased insight and awareness into your research practices and support needs.

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

Questions? You may contact the researchers at any time if you have additional questions about the study, or, if you have any questions about your rights as an interviewee, you may contact the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 1-866-789-6215 or uicirb@uic.edu.

I _____ understand and consent to participate in the study as described above including:

___ being interviewed and being audio-recorded during the interview

Participant Signature: _____   Date: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____   Date: _____

Sample Recruitment Email

Subject: Invitation to participate in Research habits of faculty in literature, culture, and writing studies

Dear [Name of faculty],

The UIC Library is conducting a study to examine the research support needs of 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 researchers like you.

Your perspective would be especially helpful for the study because of your work in [specific information about faculty's research]. Would you be willing to participate in an interview to share your unique experiences and perspectives? (The interview will last approximately one hour.)

This local study 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. The information gathered at UIC will also be included in a 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.

If you have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to contact us. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Investigators]