



Grace Communion Seminary

Research Resources Available off Campus

Introduction

Higher education exists to help students learn, and to help them find the knowledge that others have recorded (i.e., how to do research). We at GCS want to teach, but we are also interested in helping you learn to do your own research by seeking out, analyzing, and using knowledge yourself. This skill is especially important for those engaged in Christian ministry.

Christian ministry takes us out of the campus-based academic setting and into many places in the world where instructors, libraries, and other traditional sources of information are not readily available. From small towns, to inner city neighborhoods, to the mission field, and many other places throughout the world, most of our Christian ministry takes place in environments where we will not have easy access to information.

Learning to use the resources that are available where we are, including internet-based resources, is an important part of preparing for Christian ministry as well as learning to be a good student. This paper is designed to help you get started in the process of learning to do research outside the traditional, campus-based, academic environment.

There are two basic steps to research: 1) identifying sources that have the information you need and 2) then accessing those sources.

For example:

Step one: Identifying a source that has information I need: If I were writing a paper on Thomas Torrance's understanding of "covenanted response," I might start by looking at one of his books, *Incarnation*. Torrance mentions this concept of "covenanted response" on page 40 of that book and there is a footnote on that page that refers the reader to another book by Torrance called *The Mediation of Christ*. By reading *Incarnation* and looking at that footnote, I have

identified a source (*The Mediation of Christ*) that has information that may help me. That is step one.

Step two: Accessing that source: Assume for this example that I do not own a copy of *The Mediation of Christ*. I will need to purchase it, borrow it from a library, or, perhaps, access some of its content online. That is step two.

Section one of this paper offers advice on step one, identifying sources, and section two offers advice on step two, how to locate and access those sources.

Section 1: Identifying Sources

To begin your research you need to identify books and articles that address the subject you are researching. You may already own, or be aware of, some sources that can serve as starting points in your research. As you seek to expand the number and quality of sources that you can access for your research, the following strategies may be helpful.

Library Catalog

At your local public library, or if you have access to an academic library (see below, “Local Academic Libraries”), you can use the library’s catalog to find books and articles on a given subject. Most libraries now offer online access to their catalogs. Skimming through the titles of books and articles within a particular subject heading will give you an idea of what sources might be available, as well as which authors may have written extensively on a particular subject.

WorldCat is an excellent online resource for locating books in libraries near you. At their website, www.worldcat.org, you can enter your search terms (such as title, author, or subject) and it will return a list of resources, and will tell you which libraries near you have that particular resource. Worldcat will also give you correct bibliographic information for the books. In the upper right-hand corner of a book page, click on “Cite/Export.” That can help you give proper data in the Works Cited section of your papers.

If your local library does not have many sources on the subject you are researching, you can access the online catalogs of other, larger libraries and use their collections as a starting point for finding sources of information. For example, the **Library of Congress** offers an online catalog of their collection and includes on its basic search page a number of good tips on how to effectively search a library catalog. (See <http://goo.gl/Tcjs6H>.) Using their online catalog, you could identify sources that you would like to use, and then find those sources using one of the methods described below in “Section 2: Locating and Accessing Sources.”

Once you obtain a particular book or article, you can then use that book's bibliography and citations to lead you to more information on the subject.

Online Booksellers

Online booksellers such as www.amazon.com can be useful for doing research and identifying resources that relate to your topic. Online bookstores can be searched based on subject, title, and author (just like library catalogs) and they also generate "suggestions" based on your search.

For example: If I search for "Communion" on Amazon, it responds with thousands of products. I can narrow that search by clicking on "Books" in the left-hand column. I can narrow it further by selecting "Religion & Spirituality" then selecting "Christian Books & Bibles" and then selecting "Sacraments." I have now narrowed my search to the word "Communion" within the section on Christian Sacraments. When I click on a title in the list of books, I can scroll down the page describing that book and see other recommendations that Amazon has generated based on my interest in this subject.

Search Engines

Search engines such as **Google, Bing, and Yahoo** can also serve as starting points for finding information. As you go through the search results, you may find references to books and articles that you can then locate and use as sources. Google will often return the Wikipedia article on a given subject as the first search result (for example, try searching "Constantine the Great" on Google), so be sure to read the section below on Wikipedia before you use a Wikipedia article in your research.

Theological Journals Search

This search engine is custom designed and hosted on Google to allow searches that return results only from journals and magazines that address theological and religious subjects. Depending on the access provided by the particular journal that published the article, you may or may not be able to access

the article referenced in the search results. Even if you cannot access the article, this search engine can help you discover the article's existence, and you can then use one of the techniques described below in the section on "Locating and Accessing Sources" to obtain access to the article. The Theological Journals Search can be found at: <http://goo.gl/uWu45a>.

Wikipedia

The website <http://en.wikipedia.org> can be a good starting place for locating primary and secondary source material on a subject. It is a free, online encyclopedia that is written and edited by people who use it. Because Wikipedia is free and is not the work of a large publishing house (as, for example, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is), it is often regarded as untrustworthy. In fact, Wikipedia is produced by very dedicated amateurs who follow a rigorous system of rules and peer review. As a result, it is more accurate and helpful than many people think.

However, *Wikipedia information should never be taken as factual without checking it, and Wikipedia should never be cited as a source in a research paper.* Wikipedia's facts need to be checked because its contributors are not professionals. Anyone in the world can edit the article, and sometimes such people are simply trying to promote a particular point of view on a controversial subject.

Wikipedia should never be cited as a source because tertiary sources (such as encyclopedias) are not adequate for academic research. Academic research must use primary and secondary sources. Therefore, even reputable encyclopedias should serve only as a starting point for research and should never be cited as sources in your research.

What, then, would be the use of Wikipedia? An article on Wikipedia can serve as a general introduction to a subject. Most Wikipedia articles are generally accurate and can thus point you to key issues, main ideas, important persons, and recognized authorities on a given subject. You can then take this basic, introductory information and use it to start locating useful primary and secondary

sources of information on the subject. You should then use these primary and secondary sources to check the facts in the Wikipedia article.

The best features of a Wikipedia article are the “References,” “Notes,” “Citations,” and “External Links” found at the end of each article. Here you will find bibliographic information on primary and secondary sources related to the topic of the article. For example, the Wikipedia article on Constantine the Great cites scores of other sources that you could use to do research on him (scroll to the bottom of the page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great to see the sources the article could point you towards.)

The Internet Public Library

The Internet Public Library (www.ipl.org) is a search engine that can create less cluttered results than other services, such as Google, because it searches a database of websites and web-based articles that have already been evaluated and sorted by librarians. It allows searching within specific subjects, such as Religion and Theology. It also offers an email-based “Ask a Librarian” feature that allows you to get online help from a reference librarian – although you cannot expect instant results, the evening before your paper is due.

The Archive Library

The copyright has expired on books published before 1923, and many of these have been scanned and are available for free in pdf form. If you are dealing with an older book, go to <https://archive.org/advancedsearch.php> to see if they have it.

Princeton Seminary Digital Library

The Princeton Seminary Library has access to full articles from their journals that are greater than five years old. Go to the digital library site and start searching the subjects you are interested in: <http://diglib.ptsem.edu/>.

Review of Biblical Literature

The Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) provides online access to book reviews at its Review of Biblical Literature website (<http://www.bookreviews.org>). In an academic setting, a book review is more than just a critique of whether the book is well written. These reviews are designed to give the reader a good idea of the content of the book including the issues addressed, the analytical approaches taken, and the conclusions reached by the author. This could be very helpful if you are aware of a book that you think might be helpful in your research but you do not know for sure. By reading a review on this site, you could determine whether the book is worth pursuing with one of the techniques described below in the section on locating and accessing sources (such as whether you should try to request it from your local library through interlibrary loan).

Directory of Open Access Journals

Many journals and magazines require that you be a subscriber in order to access their online content. The Directory of Open Access Journals (www.doaj.org) is a list of journals that allow open access to their content. The Directory lists many journals in the subject area of Religion. If you are looking for an article on a specific subject, you may be able to find it in one of these journals.

Religious and Theological Abstracts

Religious and Theological Abstracts (<http://www.rtabst.org>) is a website that provides a searchable database of summaries of articles from journals of religious and theological study. It costs \$45 per year for an individual to have complete access to the site, but this fee could be worth it. For any subject you search, it will return results of hundreds of articles from many different journals. Each search result includes a one-paragraph summary of what the article is about.

Using this highly specific search engine, you could locate articles that are exactly on point for the topic you are researching, and then use one of the techniques described below in “Locating and Accessing Sources” (such as visiting a nearby academic library) to locate and access the article.

RTABST allows you to do *five trial searches for free*, so you can see whether you think it will be useful before you buy a subscription.

Religion Online

Religion Online (<http://www.religion-online.org>) has a wide range of reprinted articles grouped by subject. If your topic is included in one of their subject areas, you may be able to locate articles, complete with the necessary bibliographic information, that address your topic.

Online Bible Commentaries

If you are doing research on a topic in the Bible or in biblical theology, you may find online commentaries useful. Several Bible research and Christian sites have commentaries available online. However, you should be careful to use modern commentaries that incorporate newer research.

For example, the website www.biblegateway.com includes access to some of Matthew Henry's commentary and the IVP New Testament Commentaries on their commentaries page: <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/> The Matthew Henry commentaries are too old to be used in research, but the IVP commentary could be useful and is accessible through the Bible Gateway site.

Mark Goodacre's website <http://www.ntgateway.com/> is a useful starting point for academic research in the New Testament.

Google Books

One of the interesting features that Google offers is "Google Books." You can locate this feature by going to books.google.com. It enables you to search online previews of some books that Google makes available through its search engine.

Here's an example of how this might be useful in research: Suppose I remember that somewhere in his writings C.S. Lewis told a story about a girl he knew who was raised to think of God as a perfect substance and as a result she ended up thinking of him as a “vast tapioca pudding.” I would like to refresh my memory about this story, quote it accurately, and be able to include a reference to it in my paper with complete bibliographic information. In the days before Google, this would require determining in which book Lewis told this story and finding a copy of the book so that I can obtain the page number where the quote is found, the publisher, the copyright date, etc.

If I go to Google Books, however, and search for the phrase “vast tapioca pudding” (with quote marks), the second search result that comes up is labeled by Google as “Miracles – Page 117.” (Try doing the search yourself if you are having trouble visualizing this.) When I click on that search result, Google shows me an image of page 117 of *Miracles* by C.S. Lewis, and there is the exact story I want to reference.

Google is giving me a preview of the book. The entire book is not available, but the quote that I need is there. To obtain the bibliographic information, I simply click on the image of the book's front cover (Google places that image at the top left of the page.) From the image of the book's front cover, I can scroll forward a page or two and find the page with the copyright information. In this case it is the Harper-Collins 2001 edition, page 117.

Using Google in this way would not allow me to read an entire book because in most cases, Google only offers a preview of the book, not the entire text. It does, however, allow me to find the quote I need, and the bibliographic information to use that quote, without having to obtain a copy of the book.

Section 2: Locating and Accessing Sources

Once you have identified a resource that may be helpful in your research, you now need to locate it and access it. For example, your reading of a Wikipedia article may have identified a particular book that is considered the leading work on the subject, or an article that was a groundbreaking advance in the subject. The following strategies may be helpful in finding a copy of that book or article so that you can access, use, and cite the information it contains.

Local Academic Libraries

Is there a college or university close to you? If so, you may be able to access the resources of their library. This would be especially helpful if a seminary, Bible college, or university with a religion department is located nearby. Any of these schools would have books related to Christian ministry and theology as a part of their basic collection, and they are often willing to let visitors read them.

Finding an Academic Library

One way to locate an academic library is to use the library directory at www.libdex.com. This website has an extensive listing of libraries in countries all over the world. Go to your country's page, then to your state/province, and then to your city, and you will find a list of libraries in your area. You might be surprised at what is already near you. The worldcat.org site, as mentioned earlier, will also let you know what libraries are near you.

In a similar vein is the “Repositories of Primary Sources” page on the University of Idaho website (goo.gl/j32pQ9). This page organizes links to libraries throughout the world that have special collections of primary sources. There is some duplication between this page and Libdex, especially in the U.S., but if you are looking for an original document of a primary source this page could be helpful.

Public Access to an Academic Library

Policies on outside use of the library vary from school to school. As our example, we will look at the policy of the Divinity Library at Duke University in Durham, NC. Their policy is typical of a large institution in a major city. If you live near Duke you can go there, walk into the library, and read anything you want. U.S. copyright law permits students to photocopy selections from books for purposes of research (see, for example, this paper written by the American Library Association [ALA] and posted on the website of Santa Clara University: <http://www.scu.edu/provost/policies/upload/appendix-g.pdf>).

So you could find the information you need in a book at the Duke Library and photocopy the page with the quote you want to reference in your paper. Be sure to write down, on the photocopy, all the bibliographic information you will need to properly cite the source of the quote, because you will not have access to the book once you get home (although in most cases the bibliographic information is also available through their online library catalog). Copyright law allows you to photocopy portions of a book, not the whole book.

Some libraries give full library privileges to visitors for a fee. Some seminaries give clergy library privileges for free. If there is an academic library within driving distance of you, it is worth checking out their visitor policy. You may be able to access a world-class research facility for free or for a small annual fee.

Your Local Public Library

Even if there is no academic library nearby, your local public library can be a good place for research. Depending on the size of your city and the resources allocated to your local library system, the public library may have a surprisingly wide collection of books and journals on Christianity, ministry, and theology. Before going to more extreme measures to locate a book or journal article, check to see if your local library has a copy.

Almost all public libraries in the U.S. participate in the Interlibrary Loan system. If your local library does not have the book you need, you can file a free, or relatively low cost, interlibrary loan request, and your local library will find that book in the collection of another library in the U.S. and borrow it so that you can check it out.

The potential of using interlibrary loan is another good reason for starting work on your research paper right away, at the start of the semester. The process of obtaining a book through interlibrary loan can take a few weeks. If you request it early enough, then you will have it in time to use it in your research. You can also expedite the process by providing your local librarian with all the necessary bibliographic information, such as the ISBN of the book. The less work the librarian has to do in identifying the book, the faster the process will go.

How do you get the bibliographic information, including ISBN, if you don't own a copy of the book? Go to www.amazon.com and look it up. As part of their description of the item, they will include the publisher, date of publication, and ISBN. WorldCat.org also has that information, and it is the database that most interlibrary loan departments use.

Christian Classics Ethereal Library

The Christians Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL www.ccel.org) is an excellent online resource for accessing books from Christian history that are now in the public domain. This includes almost all of the writings of the Church Fathers, many resources from the Reformation, and even some works from the 19th and early 20th centuries. All the books at CCEL can be accessed for free, although some downloadable formats are available only for a fee, and CCEL does ask for donations to help support their work. Their collection is searchable by title, author, keywords, and even scripture reference.

CCEL is especially helpful since many research topics in theology and Christian ministry require historical perspective. Using CCEL you can access sources on the historical background of a topic without having to leave your computer. If you are having trouble locating the sources you need to research a

topic in its modern context, in some cases you can change the focus of your research paper to address the historical aspects of a subject instead. For example, instead of researching “The Practice of Communion in the Methodist Church,” you might change to “The Practice of Communion as Described in the Greek-Speaking Church Fathers.” (Both are impossibly large topics for a research paper.) A historical approach to the subject would allow you to do most of your research within the collection of CCEL.

Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) is an online library of books whose copyrights have expired in the U.S, and is similar to archive.org. Electronic versions of these books have been created and uploaded to the Gutenberg website for free download by anyone who wants to access them. The website is much like the CCEL except it offers books on a wide range of subjects, not just ones related to Christianity. In some cases a book not yet available at CCEL may be accessible at Project Gutenberg.

Purchasing Books

Sometimes books on Christian ministry and theology are relatively inexpensive when compared to books in other fields of learning. As a result it can sometimes be worth the effort to simply buy the book you need even if you are not sure that you want to own it forever. Online retailers such as www.amazon.com and www.alibris.com often offer used copies of books at less than half the cost of a new copy. If you are having trouble locating a book you need for your research, it is worth checking to see how much a used copy is. Some used books on www.amazon.com (such as the paperback version of *The Shack*) sell used for as little as \$0.01 + \$3.99 in shipping (for a total cost of \$4.00). Your local bookstore (Christian or otherwise) can also order any book in print for you, and some retailers carry a selection of books on Christian ministry and theology.

An excellent resource for comparing prices on books is www.bookfinder.com. Here you can enter a title and it will return results listing the price of both new and used copies of the book, with shipping already calculated, at

all the major online retailers. This will save you the time of going to each retailer's website, one by one, to comparison shop.

Amazon.com's "Look Inside" Feature

The bookseller www.amazon.com offers a feature that is very similar to the "Google Books" search tool described above – but Amazon's system requires that you know the name of the book that you are looking for. In that sense Amazon's tool is not so much about identifying sources as it is about accessing a source you already know about. That is why the Amazon search feature is included in this section even though it functions in a way that is similar to "Google Books."

Using the same example we used in our discussion of "Google Books," we can see how Amazon's search feature can be helpful. Suppose a friend has told me that in his book *Miracles* C.S. Lewis talks about how child-like images of God can carry over into our adult thinking about him. I would like to access Lewis's thinking on this subject, but I do not have a copy of the book readily available.

I go to www.amazon.com and search in the "Books" category for *Miracles*. The first search result is a paperback edition of that title. Immediately to the left of the written description of the item is an image of the book with the words "Look Inside!" at the top of the image. (Try doing the search yourself if you are having trouble visualizing this.) When I click on this image, Amazon displays some of the contents of the book. In small print in the left hand column is a small box labelled "Search inside this book."

In that box I can enter search terms to see what is inside the book. Since I know I am looking for any thoughts that Lewis might have about childish images of God, I search the terms "girl" and "think." The first result that comes up is Lewis's story, from page 117, about the girl who thought of God as "a vast tapioca pudding." When I click on that search result, Amazon takes me to an image of page 117 of the book and I can then read what Lewis says there and quote the story. As with "Google Books" I simply have to scroll through Amazon's image of the book to the title page to find the necessary bibliographic information.

Amazon does not offer the “Look Inside” option on all books and, as with “Google Books,” it does not provide an online copy of the entire text of the book. However, when you know the book you are looking for, and you only need one or two pieces of information contained in the book, this feature can be helpful and save you a trip to the library or the book store.

Amazon has designed their searchable books in such a way that you cannot print the text in the normal way, nor can you copy and paste text into your word processor. If you want to print or to save an electronic copy, you will need to use the “print screen” key, and paste the image into a program such as Paint.net.

To see an example of how the “Look Inside” feature can be useful, you can look at the list of resources that Michael Morrison prepared for one of his classes: <http://sites.google.com/site/gcsnt02/luke>. Click on the links provided there and experiment with searching inside the text that Amazon has provided.