NCIS Guide for Independent Scholars

Edited by

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Foreword by Ronald Gross

National Coalition of Independent Scholars

Title: NCIS Guide for Independent Scholars

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Cover design conceptualized by Elias Scott

Cover design realized by Gwen Capon

ISBN: 979-8-9872764-1-9

First edition published March 2024
by the National Coalition of Independent Scholars
2134 Parkview Place South Bend, IN 46616, USA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume is the fruit of over two years' work by a number of people whose contribution we wish to acknowledge. Firstly, our gratitude must go to Ron Gross who gave his blessing for us to produce this Guide in the spirit of his *Independent Scholar's Handbook,* and who has generously agreed to write the Foreword for this volume. Our grateful thanks also go to Barbara Wilson, on whose initiative this volume was conceived, and who spent much time ensuring that the legal basis for this volume was in place. Along the way we have also had valuable initial input from Yvonne Groseil, Helen Ross and Sandra Ham, as well as the support of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS). We are also immensely grateful to Gwen Capon for the cover design, in which the puzzle pieces – some interlocking, some out of place – represent the research process.

We are also indebted to those scholars who have contributed chapters, without whom this volume would not have seen the light of day. We would also like to note that, as the authors hail from the USA, the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia we have left their writing in their choice of American or British English, so as to preserve their individual voices.

Lastly, a key tenet of NCIS publications is that they should all be completely open access, free and available to download and read. This volume is therefore published online as a PDF on the NCIS website and we hope will be of use to ISs both present and future. Copyright for each chapter belongs to the contributing author, so if you wish to cite anything from this volume, please approach the editors and/or author for permission.

WARNING

(to those of a nervous academic disposition)

We should also warn you that, as our guiding principle is to encourage Independent Scholars, we have encouraged contributors to use a tone that is more friendly and direct – conversational, even – than the traditional impersonal academic voice. You will therefore find the use of the first person, active voice, and contractions such as "we've" and "don't" much in evidence. What's more, while some chapters may be fully referenced, others are very personal accounts and may not even have a bibliography [gasp!]. We ask that you tolerate these omissions and read the chapters in the spirit of this volume, which is to bring you the experiences of Independent Scholars across the world and show you how they – and you – can break down the barriers to successful independent research.

FOREWORD

by RONALD GROSS

Author of *The Independent Scholar's Handbook*

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It is an honor for me to welcome this much-needed Guide to our flourishing world of Independent Scholarship. *Bravo* to the editors who conceived and have nurtured this project to such a successful outcome: co-editors Amanda Haste and Linda Baines, consultants Barbara Wilson and Yvonne Groseil, and all the generous contributors.

These pages brim with inspiration and advice from our colleagues who have themselves struggled with the challenges we all face. They have distilled hard-won wisdom into useable how-to – as so helpfully delineated by the Editors in their Introduction.

I hope that this publication will fuel a resurgence of Independent Scholarship. It comes at a particularly auspicious time, given:

- The burgeoning of unaffiliated researchers and authors exploring non-traditional subjects and using innovative methodologies.
- The parlous prospects for our colleges and universities – financial and intellectual.
- The urgent need for expertise and creativity addressing momentous issues that transcend academic categories, including: Climate, Social Justice, Inequality and Poverty, Gender Issues and Aging.

> *"The world needs the inspiration of our undamaged instinctive love for the truth."*
> **Buckminster Fuller**

In the spirit of specificity which informs this volume, I want to use my space here to acclaim three examples of programs by and for Independent Scholars, which deserve to be widely replicated. Each of them could inspire adaptations in other situations – perhaps yours! The first shows how Independent Scholars can launch a collective that makes a crucial contribution addressing to of the crises of our time. The anthology All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine Wilkinson, does this in three ways:

- It's an illuminating book of essays, poetry, and artwork, much of it by independents.
- It's an activist program which has inspired groups around the world.
- It's sparked a global network of persons dedicated to this cause.

As the journal ATMOS put it: *"The authors have gathered a chorus of 60 courageous women who are using their individual voices to create collective change around the climate crisis. The resulting anthology is an anthem for the world – at once a battle cry and unifying hymn, a mournful melody and a song of salvation that will ring true for generations to come."*

> *"I don't see how you can write anything of value in social science if you don't offend someone."*
> **Marvin Harris**

A second exemplification of outstanding innovation and relevance by and for Independent Scholars is the University Seminars program at Columbia University, which demonstrates how colleges and universities can form alliances to enrich their intellectual communities and share their resources.

Independent Scholars play prominent roles in these Seminars which meet at Columbia once a month throughout the academic year to study and discuss subjects sometimes beyond their specialties. Today, over 90 seminars are on-going. The program's founder, Frank Tannenbaum, proclaimed the rationale eloquently:

> *"Intellectual fellowship encompasses both the theorist and the practitioner. Scholars may come from the academy or the mundane world. Each Seminar is held together by supporting one another's curiosities. We are drawn to open vistas hidden in the unknown experience of another profession or a colleague's venture into the unexpected. Only in this fashion can we hope to rediscover the wisdom we need."*

> ***"We must somehow figure out how to become a democracy of intellect. Knowledge must sit in the homes and heads of people with no ambition to control others, and not up in the isolated seats of power."*** **Jacob Bronowski**

A third suggestive "model" is the Socrates Salon, sponsored by the public library in Great Neck, New York. It convenes monthly via Zoom, with participants working in subjects including Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy, the history of the lower East Side of NYC, the relationships among cuisine and national cultures, interpersonal relationships, Nazi Germany and the future of AI. Geographically, the saloneers join the call from locations stretching from the U.S. West Coast to the U.K. and Pakistan. Among the topics which these scholars have chosen to explore are *Reimagining Our Neighborhoods; Who Do We Trust?; Food; Experimental Ethics; Sharing Our Lessons for Living; Luck and Success; Uncluttering; Justice;* and *What Does America Mean to You Now? "These gatherings are a wondrous enrichment of my life*," one regular participant reported. *"Finding colleagues who share wide-ranging and deep-going interests would otherwise not be possible for me."*

> ***" For those who have experienced it, the hour of awakening of passion for knowledge is the most memorable of a lifetime."*** **Colin Wilson**

In the pages which follow, you will encounter a myriad of other inspiring models and strategies. Welcome, friends and colleagues, to this feast of encouragement and support!

Ron Gross *co-chairs the University Seminar on Innovation at Columbia University and is the founder/director of Conversations New York, a widely-acclaimed program of free public community-based conversations. His books, published in 27 countries, cover the life-span from childhood to old age, including* The Children's Rights Movement, Radical School Reform, High School, The Great School Debate, Peak Learning, The Lifelong Learner, The Independent Scholar, The New Professionals, Individualism, *and* The New Old*. His most recent book is* Socrates' Way: Seven Master Keys to Using Your Mind to the Utmost*. Gross has supported lifelong learning initiatives in Europe, the Far East, Israel, Canada, and Mexico, sponsored by agencies such as the European Foundation for Management Development, the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Ford and Rothschild Foundations. In 2013 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Society for Self-Directed Learning, was inducted into the Lifelong Learning Hall of Fame of the International Association for Adult and Continuing Education in 2014, and in 2019 received Columbia University's Tannenbaum/Warner Award for Distinguished Scholarship and Service.*

INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this volume is Ron Gross's *The Independent Scholar's Handbook*, which has long been the seminal guide for Independent Scholars. First published in 1982, and reprinted in 1993, the *Handbook* promoted the notion of Independent Scholarship and a "democracy of intellect"[1] in which "those of us trying to do serious intellectual work outside academe can look to one another for colleagueship."[2]

Thirty years later, these principles are still very much at the centre of Independent Scholarship, but the world has changed immeasurably in the interim. The arrival of the worldwide web, and the subsequent influence of internet-based resources and platforms on all our lives have not only led to the ability to instantly communicate with other researchers all over the world via email and videoconferencing, but also significantly increased access to resources such as archives and libraries. We now have new fields which were unheard of when Ron Gross's *Handbook* first appeared, such as Digital Humanities, which NCIS celebrated with its 2015 conference at Yale University on the theme of "Traditions and Transitions: Independent Scholars and the Digital Landscape."

The academic landscape has also been transformed over the last few decades, with the ever-increasing adjunctification of universities, by which tenured posts are fewer and farther between, and the average proportion of adjunct faculty – contingency faculty on short-term contracts with no job security – is 70%. Opportunities for newly minted PhDs to enter the tenure track are therefore much diminished, meaning that to remain in academia many scholars' only option is a succession of low-paid, insecure adjunct positions. Conditions within academia have also deteriorated, meaning that NCIS is seeing an increasing number of applications, not only from adjunct faculty, emeritus professors, and PhDs who have not considered an academic career, but also from tenured faculty who are increasingly leaving their secure jobs in favor of a better work-life balance.

Independent scholars therefore come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and in **Part 1 "Situating Independent Scholarship"** we first present our overview which answers many of the questions asked by potential Independent Scholars: "What is an Independent Scholar, and how do they survive?". **Susan Breitzer** then gives a brief history of learned societies and the academic hierarchy and makes the case for increasing the visibility of Independent Scholars in the academic landscape, while **Linda Baines** discusses the phenomenon of "Late-Blooming Researchers" (LBR) which sees many people undertaking doctoral research later in life: such LBRs form a significant proportion of the NCIS membership.

In **Part 2 "Journeys to Independent Scholarship"** we present a selection of essays depicting some of the many and varied journeys to Independent Scholarship. Each of these uses a different perspective which illustrates the challenges – and joys – of actively researching and publishing outside the confines of academia. In her reflections on the Ph.D. as a path to independent scholarship, former diplomat **Ruth Adler** explores her experience of doing two PhDs, one in her 20s and the other in her late 50s: she examines the reasons for doing a PhD, how to go about it and how to ensure completion. In "Finding freedom outside academia" **Jane S. Gabin** relates her career as an academic administrator, which fed into a life of activism and her current role with Higher Education Labor United, using her writing skills for the improvement of working conditions for the adjunct/contingent faculty who do most of the teaching in higher education. In "Finding a home in Independent Scholarship" **Kathryn Burrows** then gives an honest account of the challenging – yet fulfilling – role she has carved out as an Independent

[1] Ron Gross, *The Independent Scholar's Handbook* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1993) p. xv.

[2] Ron Gross, *The Independent Scholar's Handbook*, p. x.

Scholar, whose teaching, scholarly work, consultancy and service mirrors that of academia, but which she is able to conduct at her own pace.

In **Part 3, "Making Life Easier for Ourselves"** we widen the scope beyond the personal to focus on some of the particular issues facing Independent Scholars, and the solutions they have found. In "The power and empowerment of mentorship" **Tisa M. Anders** tackles the need for mentoring – and the opportunities for successful Independent Scholars to mentor others – illustrating her essay with events from her own life as a scholar-activist and vivid examples of the importance of networking. **Phillip Reid** takes a disciplinary approach to discuss "Being an Independent Scholar in history," focusing on how to carry out your research on a tight budget, operating on the margins of disciplinary fashion, and being resourceful in accessing materials. And finally, in "How much time do we have to do something great?" **Susan Breitzer** draws inspiration from creative works (in this case, musicals) to explore the challenge of maintaining ones "'spark' and motivation" in the creative process of conducting and publishing independent research.

Part 4 "Practical guides for Independent Scholars" focuses on the nitty-gritty of research, especially in those areas where a lack of institutional support can constitute a considerable disadvantage for Independent Scholars. These include funding for your research, gaining ethical approval, and evaluating your research. As many independent researchers engage with more than one discipline, often conducting interdisciplinary research, **Amanda J. Haste** contributes a chapter on the ins and outs of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. **Sandra A. Ham** gives an in-depth exploration of technical writing, **Kevin Hans Waitkuweit** discusses how best to use data, methods and software in social sciences, and **Helen Kara** investigates the ever-present ethical issues involved in doing independent research. To complete this section, **Amanda J. Haste** explains the various ways you can ensure the rigor of your research through mechanisms such as peer review.

Part 5 "How to survive as an Independent Scholar" focuses on Independent Scholars' need to consider the financial side of conducting independent research: how to pay the bills and how to fund their research. They often have side gigs which may be directly related to their research and writing skills, or use other skills gained through their lifetime (see Chapter 1.1. "What is an Independent Scholar, and how do they survive?" for an introductory discussion). In this section, **Phillip Reid** discusses the reality of funding your research through grants, while **Helen Kara** walks us through the different strands which contribute to her making a successful living as an Independent Scholar. This section concludes with a chapter on the all-important (but sadly neglected) issue of self-care for Independent Scholars.

As a further resource for readers of this volume, **Part 6 "Resources for Independent Scholars"** provides details of both physical and virtual resources of use to ISs, including not only books and articles but also the academic blogs and Facebook/Meta pages (both serious and lighthearted) that are so useful in supporting our academic lives.

As you can see, this volume contains active hyperlinks, but we have not provided an index on the grounds that, as a PDF, it is eminently searchable.

As you can see, this volume goes well beyond simply expounding comforting theories and is rather built on the lived experience of those who have been conducting independent research for many years. We hope you will benefit from the advice and encouragement offered, as you pursue your own journey into the liberating world of Independent Scholarship beyond the confines of academia.

Amanda J. Haste & Linda Baines

Editors

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Dr Amanda J. Haste is an Anglo-French musicologist and academic translator who has published widely on contemporary monastic music, identity construction through music and language, musician identity, and linguistic issues. She is a Chartered Linguist, and from 2015-2023 was adjunct faculty at Aix-Marseille University, France, teaching undergraduates in Applied Languages, and undergraduate and postgraduates in Musicology. She co-edited (with James Block) *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization* (Paris: Ex Modio, 2015) and her first monograph *Music and Identity in Twenty-First-Century Monasticism* was published by Routledge in October 2023. She is currently working on her second monograph, *The British in Marseille, 1850-1914*.
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PART 1

SITUATING INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP

WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR… AND HOW DO THEY SURVIVE?

Amanda J. Haste (FRANCE) &
Linda Baines (UNITED KINGDOM)

The short answer to this question is that an Independent Scholar is someone who conducts scholarly research outside universities and traditional academia. They usually (but not always) have a higher degree such as a Masters or a PhD but are not affiliated with any academic institution; however, they still participate in academia by attending conferences, publishing articles in scholarly journals and books with academic presses, thus demonstrating their analytical skills and academic writing style. That said, Independent Scholars may still have some kind of affiliated connection with a university as a visiting researcher, and/or work for a university on a casual basis supervising students.

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars uses the following criteria:

> "By Independent Scholar, we mean someone who is actively engaged in scholarly research or a comparable peer-reviewed artistic endeavor (for example, a juried art exhibition or a finalist in a music competition), but who is not a tenure-track or tenured professor (or, in some countries, does not have a permanent contract at a university) and is not employed elsewhere for the purpose of completing the qualifying research or artistic activity."

This means that adjunct (contingent) faculty employed on a course-by-course with no job security are included in the NCIS definition of 'Independent Scholar,' and indeed are well represented among the membership.

Other institutions exclude adjunct faculty from this definition: for example, for their grant program the Independent Social Research Foundation defines the term thus: "an 'Independent Scholar' is understood as someone, whether or not currently in (non-academic) employment, who is engaged in intellectual work of a nature and standard comparable to that of a professional academic scholar."

Scholarship has been around since well before the invention of "the academy" meaning that many renowned scholars such as Samuel Johnson, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud were themselves Independent Scholars. The comparatively recent "academisation" of knowledge means that scholars are often identified only in terms of their affiliation – or lack of it – and this issue of identity – not to mention the lack of financial and institutional support – can lead to anxiety over identifying as an Independent Scholar, or "indie".

That said, as permanent faculty positions become increasingly rare, the indie community is increasing all the time, so here we will set out what it means to be part of this community, and the pros and cons of indie life. Firstly, we present a redaction of Kathryn Allan's excellent analysis of five myths about indies: as she says, "There is a pervasive sense that identifying as an Independent Scholar is risky and should be avoided" but "this hand-wringing and name calling comes mostly from those still firmly entrenched within academia."[1]

FIVE MYTHS ABOUT INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

Myth #1: "Independent scholar" is a placeholder title for unemployed PhDs

Firstly, "an Independent Scholar has an active track-record of scholarly research and publishing, 'active' being the key word that distinguishes an Independent Scholar from an unemployed PhD. Second, it is entirely possible to have a PhD, be employed in a non-academic position, and carry out Independent Scholarship."[2]

Myth #2: Independent scholars are crackpots

"I'm sure that some Independent Scholars are indeed "crackpots," but so are some "real" academics and professors. A label does not determine quality of work, as peer review processes ensure academic rigour"[3] (See Chapter 4.5 on evaluating and ensuring the rigor of your research.)

Myth #3: Independent scholars are really retired professors

"Yes, there are definitely retired professors who now identify as Independent Scholars" and indeed NCIS membership includes a growing number of emeritus professors, as well as those who have left tenured posts in favour of a better work-life balance. "But there are also Independent Scholars who have never been employed by the university past their graduate education. There are even Independent Scholars who don't hold advanced degrees because they are self-educated and have pursued their passion to academic levels of intensity."[4]

Myth #4: Academic publications aren't open to Independent Scholars

"The idea that you must have a university affiliation for any academic publication to take your work seriously is a particularly pervasive myth. Definitely untrue.... If your work is solid, then the Independent Scholar label will not limit your opportunities. If you present yourself professionally, then you will be taken seriously."[5]

Myth #5: An Independent Scholar is a wannabe professor/failed academic

"There are many reasons why someone chooses to pursue scholarship outside of university employment. Given the dreary state of the academic job market, an ever-growing number of advanced degree holders find themselves unwilling or unable to chase tenure-track jobs around the world. Choosing Independent Scholarship can be a political decision, a way of taking some authority away from the university – or a lifestyle choice in favour of multiple career and research avenues that are not possible for a tenure-tracked academic."[6] Ultimately, scholarship "is possible beyond the university, and academia does not hold the rights to original thought or innovation."[7]

IDENTIFYING AS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Having established that being an Independent Scholar doesn't present a barrier to producing good scholarship, it would be useful to hear from reflections from some of those who have considered adopting this identity. These comments were all proffered in response to an article by Julie R. Enzer entitled "What Shall I Call Myself?"[8] posted on the NICS Facebook page.[9]

> **[Epidemiologist, USA] "**I first came upon 'Independent Scholar' when googling the term 'Private Scholar' .... Finding myself sometime later formally retired from academia, I thought that maybe I, too, could be a Private Scholar. The term has a certain dignity and sense of freedom from the politics and perversities of the academy. Of course, this side of the pond the term turns out to be 'Independent Scholar', which somehow does not have the same

dignity. But as I hear about more scientists, frustrated and disgusted with academic research, forming their own research companies and competitively obtaining funding from sources ... the term Independent Scholar becomes not one of defeat and failure but rather of, well, independence and pride. The meaning of the term should come from us. If we feel "less than", then we are. It is up to us. But for Independent Scholars to be respected by academics from the academy, we will need to uphold very high standards for our work."

[Historian, USA] "I teach college history, yes, but they do not fund my research. So ... do I negotiate my title or leverage my topic? I'd prefer to leverage my topic. Therefore, I choose to 'title myself' with a third option. I tell people I am a 'professional historian' because that's what I am. IF they ask who funds my research, I tell them that although I teach in higher education, they do not fund our research at my institution. ... What do I put on MY taxes? I use 'adjunct faculty' because that's where the lion's share of my income comes from. ... So, I think the answer is what do you need to leverage and why? Am I professional? Yes. So, I choose professional historian. It fits all my needs currently. Am I an Independent Scholar? Yes, but that doesn't leverage me in the boxes above, so I don't use it. I WILL use it when I need it, but for the boxes above, other things fit better.

[Musicologist, FRANCE] "For me it's all about professional integrity. And as I used to tell my music students, you need to be professional, a term which has nothing to do with whether you're paid but has everything to do with how you conduct yourself, and how you approach your work, whether that be performance or research ... I teach several courses at a university as contingent (adjunct) faculty, but as they're not really connected to my research, and as I have no job security and no funding for my research I still choose to describe myself as an Independent Scholar. And I'm proud of it! … it represents freedom."

[Historian, UNITED KINGDOM] "Yes, 'Independent Scholar' should be a badge of honour, not embarrassment. No one owns you, and ... if the current "hot topics" in your area of scholarship don't interest you then you can steer your research in whatever direction you want to go .... I don't accept 'Independent Scholar' as a defeat, though. Not everyone can or wants to work in academia, and the rarefied atmosphere can quickly become suffocating if you find that you don't meet others' expectations of what you should be researching – or the conclusions you draw from your research. So, 'independent' means exactly that. Free to follow your own interests, research the sources you want to delve into, and ask questions – and even question the ivory tower, too."

The sentiments that emerge most clearly from these accounts are freedom, independence, dignity and professionalism, and these are explored in more depth in the personal narratives in this section of the *NCIS Guide for Independent Scholars.* However, it would not be fair to emphasize the positive without discussing the challenges of Independent Scholarship. When we ask potential members why they want to join NCIS, the most common reasons are:

- to feel part of a scholarly community (to reduce feelings of isolation and enjoy mutual support from one's peers);
- an affiliation (due to our rigorous membership vetting processes, membership of NCIS carries kudos and NCIS is often the only Independent Scholar organization listed in drop-down menus when an affiliation is required);
- access to research resources (NCIS provides letters of support for members wishing to access archives and special collections, and also offers discounted subscriptions to JSTOR).
- financial support (NCIS has an extensive grant program for which members may apply).

So isolation, lack of access to resources such as archives and journals, and financial woes are common issues for indies. This begs the question of how indies support themselves.

HOW DO INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS SUPPPORT THEMSELVES?

Those aforementioned luminaries such as Darwin and Johnson relied on a private income, but this is rarely the case nowadays. Today's independent researchers may be fortunate enough to have a private income, or a partner who earns a regular salary...or they may be retired, with a pension and the time to conduct research. For most of us, however, we need to earn a living. A brief poll on the NCIS Facebook page produced the following responses to this post: "The majority of Independent Scholars still have to earn a living, so we'd love to know how you do that, and how it relates to your research (if at all)."[1]

> *"My PhD is in musicology, but I earn my living as a freelance translator. My research has two main strands: identity construction through music and language, and the historical expatriate experience."*
>
> *"Freelance researcher and disability trainer. I end up doing small research projects on topics that I would never have looked at otherwise, which can be really interesting! (But my academic work is on disability and churches)"*
>
> *"Own a writing /editing business. Scholarly topics: 19th century US reform movements (in particular, Lydia Maria Child) and US agricultural history."*
>
> *"I own a small business teaching scholars how to develop their academic writing skills to turn their ideas into publishable scholarship."*
>
> *"I run a nonprofit in support of artists and the arts in general. Scholarly topics: 13th century French funerary art and contemporary funerary arts/practices."*
>
> *"My day job is "retired". I write encyclopedias about Shakespeare's plays."*
>
> *"I work in research administration at a children's hospital."*
>
> *"My day job is working for an extraction lab. My research is in HPSSS (History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science and Technology)."*
>
> *"I teach college (US History and Political Science). As a historian, it's right in my wheelhouse."*
>
> *"History teacher. Pays the bills so I can do the other non-paying history things."*
>
> *"Have now retired after decades in nursing and nursing education. Now pursuing a lifelong ambition to write a biography of the woman who launched the modern hospice movement."*

[1] https://www.facebook.com/groups/NationalCoalitionofIndependentScholars (23 May 2023).
https://www.facebook.com/groups/45193199258/search/?q=The majority of Independent Scholars still have to earn a living, so we'd love to know how you do that, and how it relates to your research (if at all)

"My PhD is in English Composition and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). I coach doctoral students and other researchers through the research and writing process."

"Day job: director of an adult education program with a majority immigrant population. Research interests: Japanese and Korean literature & culture though I haven't touched my interest directly in recent years, I find my multicultural and multilingual background and past research (colonial Korean and imperial Japanese women's writings) to be incredibly informative in my current work."

"I run a community organisation in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. Activism is my research interest, specifically how women come together in activism in tough, divided contexts."

"I have a Doctorate of Ministry and my work is centered in urban environmentalism and ecotheology. I'm retired clergy, wherein the bulk of my ministry over 20 years was focused in eco-spiritual praxis. I'm currently employed as a consultant with a university researching green interventions in communities of color, particularly enhancing city parks with bird meadows. As an African American my role is to foment cultural competencies in this work."

As these response show, the relationship between work life and research may be close, or completely removed. Very often, however, a person's lived experience impacts on and may inspire their research; conversely, their research may inform their daily life. There are also several instances of those monetising the writing and research skills learned during their (post)graduate studies.

CAN I EARN A LIVING DOING RESEARCH?

One question we are often asked is "can you earn a living through research alone?" Opportunities do exist, but a word of warning here: if you google "How much does an Independent Scholar earn?" you may come up with the Glassdoor figure of USD 73,000 (GBP 60,000) (October 2023). However, this applies to those who land a full-time salaried position as a researcher. More realistic is the notion of short-term contracts for which UK-based MoneyMagpie (2019) says that researchers can generally expect to be paid from minimum wage to GBP 20+ (USD 24.50+) an hour, "depending on their expertise and knowledge base" and says that you should be guided by londonfreelance.org's rate of GBP 350 (USD 430) "for 1000 words of intense research, along with utilisation of existing technical knowledge and writing." They also add the caveat that "If you're not writing, this fee will obviously be lower" and that "TV researchers are paid … around £14.90 hourly"[10] (USD 18.80). For more detailed and comprehensive accounts of earning a living as an independent researcher, see chapters 5.1 and 5.2 of this volume.

In Benefits of Being an Independent Scholar[12] Kathryn Allan identifies these benefits as advocacy, community engagement, intellectual freedom and personal satisfaction. The following chapters by a wide range of different Independent Scholars from different parts of the world detailing their journeys will surely bring these notions into sharp relief, and demonstrate why Independent Scholarship is a realistic option. We hope that you will find these accounts, and the resources in this volume, useful and enlightening as you pursue your own intellectual journey.

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INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS IN THE ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE: INCREASING OUR VISIBILITY AND REACH

Susan Breitzer (USA)

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I published an article in *The Independent Scholar*, the peer-reviewed journal of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, on the past, present, and future relationship of non-university-affiliated scholars to many learned societies. In this essay, I am reworking the article as a "how-to" guide, prefaced with a brief history of the origins of the learned society and the eventual tight coupling of learned societies (in their professional association role) and the gradual disentangling of this relationship. Essentially, I am arguing that the place of Independent Scholars in modern learned societies, especially in the humanities and social sciences is still an unsettled issue for many learned societies.[1] This is despite the increase in the last few decades of scholars in the humanities and social sciences practicing scholarship off the tenure track, either as contingent faculty or outside of academia altogether.

For the still predominantly tenure-stream leadership of organizations such as the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) the unresolved response to this shift is less of an issue of Independent Scholars' existence as players/practitioners in their field than the sense of "what to do with them." And perhaps implicit in this (and even more of moment) is the sense of non-tenure stream scholars as "them," as the "other" of the scholarly world, even when non-tenure-stream scholars are increasingly becoming the majority.[2] Visibility is only part of the issue when it comes to the place of non-tenure stream scholars in these scholarly organizations. While Independent Scholars are becoming more common on conference programs, those in the tenure-stream often still tend to "run the show" whether in terms of shaping the program or in overall leadership of the organizations; that said, more specialized councilor roles, in research and teaching divisions, has opened up possibilities for practicing historians with forms of employment – such as research repositories and pre-college teaching – that most closely correlate with the work with which these divisions concern themselves.

When Emily Rose, an award-winning medievalist and contingent faculty member at several major universities over the years started a petition to get on the ballot as a write-in candidate, she achieved double the number of signatures to get on the ballot, but not much support beyond that. Indeed, when I assisted in campaigning for her, most of the attention I was able to gather was from my graduate school colleagues, and from someone from an HBCU,[3] who spoke to me of the similar marginalization faculty from these institutions experience in organizations like the AHA. Similarly, the Organization of American Historians (OAH), despite nearly all of the founding officers from its Missouri Valley Historical Association days being employed in historical societies and archives rather than in academia, in more recent times the leadership of the organization has been more academic-heavy.[4] Then again, there may be distinctions made between those in alternate employment (depending on the field) and those who are contingent faculty, when it comes to the question of who is advanced, which in turn affects whose needs are addressed. It's not clear whether the situation is necessarily better in smaller or more specialized scholarly organizations. According to one scholar, even the Labor and Working-Class History Association, which is rightly known for being attuned to the needs of marginal and contingent workers in its scholarship and activism, has been slow to see how justice might begin at home among contingent faculty and Independent Scholars among their own ranks, beyond reduced member dues and sometimes conference travel grants.[5]

This doesn't mean that this kind of responsiveness should be scorned or dismissed, because, especially in the post-pandemic return to in-person conferences, visibility – especially the kind that helps bring about change – can mean literally being present at conferences, and when it comes to institutional support towards conference attendance and participation, contingent faculty status can be more than a "fig leaf" affiliation. Practically speaking, this kind of affiliation can make a positive difference, depending on both the institution's policies and whether it is part- or full-time contingent status, the latter being generally considered closer to "real" faculty status. This is especially apposite as many universities seek to replace tenure lines with fixed-term faculty appointments that vary in length and may or may not be renewable, with work conditions and benefits more in line with tenure-stream faculty than with part-time contingent faculty. I still remember the humiliation as part-time adjunct (contingent) faculty inquiring about travel funding to attend a conference: this was in the days before most scholarly organizations offered grants specifically to contingent faculty, and I was told I could be considered for it only if "the faculty" approve. On the other hand, during my brief time as a term full-time faculty member, I was able to enjoy full support to attend a conference, including the hotel and all the affiliated society meal meetings I wanted to attend (I even got a First-Class upgrade for the flight back).

Since that time, at least before the pandemic, I have tended to plan my conference attendance/participation based on the offering of organizational travel aid (some of which I will acknowledge has been quite generous). However, while this has filled some gaps, even the most well-endowed organization can only give out so many of these, and it may only do so much to make up for any income differentials that may be involved. So, even as Independent Scholars of various backgrounds and situations become more common on conference programs, too many effectively remain second-class citizens in the scholarly community and within scholarly societies. However, this was not always the case in the long history of the learned society, so it is all the more important to ask "how we got here" and just as importantly, how we arrived at the present status quo, which is a relatively new (and short-lived) phenomenon in the history of scholarship. A brief history of the learned society is therefore an important part of this essay – starting with their origins in the Early Modern era in Europe, when they functioned as nothing less than much-needed alternatives to the universities.

LEARNED SOCIETIES

The European universities of the Early Modern period, most founded in the Middle Ages, were church-controlled institutions and, as such, put church-based limitations on research, especially in the sciences—a situation that forced the forward-thinking to look elsewhere, but to create alternative forums for the support and dissemination of research. Learned societies as we know them thus began with the sciences in the 1600s, with the chartering of the first Royal Society in England. They were deliberately founded as an alternative forum to the universities for the spread and promotion of research not subject to university restrictions. The Enlightenment-era societies that sprang up both in England and mainland Europe went beyond the sciences to cover a variety of intellectual disciplines, and developed beyond mere parlor presentations. Some though, were notably open to women practitioners in the field, well before most universities came around.

But the idea of a learned society created by these royal societies would change significantly with the rise of the modern university from the 19th century onward, beginning in Germany and spreading to the United States, where church-affiliated schools such as Harvard and Yale transformed into the modern research-focused institutions we think of today, while the (then) new land-grant universities opened in the Midwest and elsewhere, and were specifically devoted to research.[6] The role of the university as the place for research unhindered by religious considerations continued through much of the 20th century, strengthened by the Cold War that resulted in increased support for scholarship that went well beyond the STEM disciplines. This period lasted roughly into the 1970s and was also the golden age of the easily acquired tenure-track faculty job, a shorter-lived phenomenon than has been generally realized. Even then, some scholars, especially female scholars, were excluded from the universities and functionally from some of the emerging American learned societies.

The challenges posed by exclusionary assumptions can be found throughout the history of one of the most storied American learned societies in American history – the American Historical Association (AHA). It originated as a gentleman's historical society whose first meeting in 1893 was part of the Columbian International Exposition in Chicago and was best known for the keynote lecture delivered by gentleman scholar Frederick Jackson Turner on "the Significance of the Frontier Thesis." In the AHA's subsequent long history it transformed into a modern professional scholarly association, but one whose typical member was assumed to be university-affiliated and male. Until 1994, the annual meeting was held between Christmas and New Year's Day, and only then moved to January, to better accommodate participants' family time (and presumably make air travel to the convention venues in major cities less expensive). But mid- to late-twentieth-century efforts to include more marginally affiliated scholars met with mixed success, and some foundered partially as a result of advocates' diverting energy to more overtly political issues.

One of the earliest significant efforts that took place in 1969 was aimed at reshaping the organization's Executive Council to include historians, including amateur historians and students, practicing in a variety of settings. With it came a call for greater funding for members of these marginalized groups within the profession to attend meetings. But these efforts, as admirable as they were, became sidetracked by their proponents' effort to include a resolution opposing the Vietnam War.[7] A more successful effort to promote greater inclusion was a gender-based one that resulted in the formation of the Coordinating Committee for Women in History (CCWH). This effort built on the momentum of the Radical Historians' Caucus but was less an attempt to alter the structure of the organization. Rather, they promoted greater inclusion of women in the historical profession, regardless of professional status. Though part of what the founders of the CCWH argued for was in fact the possibility of the inclusion of more Independent Scholars (regardless of gender) as well as more women, arguing that the inclusion of both could contribute to a more nurturing environment in the history profession. From a personal perspective, I remain somewhat skeptical about the gender-stereotyped aspect of this, but have duly noted the supportiveness of Independent Scholars towards one another, compared with what I've encountered within the academy. That said, the CCWH (Now the Coordinating Council for Women in History), though it is focused on advancing women is history (and women's history), maintains its advocacy for non-traditionally affiliated scholars.[8]

WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

Beyond what has amounted to the spin-off effort of the CCWH, the AHA has until very recently, made little progress in addressing the issues of Independent Scholars, and this is perhaps reflective of their similar reluctance to address the declining numbers of tenure-track jobs beyond public handwringing and (more thoughtfully) reduced annual meeting registration for un/underemployed scholars (as well as sliding-scale membership dues). But beyond the efforts of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) there has been no effort towards special recognition of Independent Scholars and their work at the annual membership meetings. In some ways, things have gone backwards, most notably with the transformation of the Herbert Feis Award—originally an award for the best history monograph by an Independent Scholar – to an award for public history. Indeed, it has only been the efforts of NCIS to establish themselves as a presence at the AHA meetings in the last couple of decades that there has been significant visibility for Independent Scholars at the annual meetings, with the recent pandemic temporarily forcing the annual meeting online possibly being a mixed blessing. Recent efforts have included a couple of affiliated society panels and roundtables, as well as a sponsored evening reception. In addition, an organizational table for distributing flyers and other information (including to graduate students who are now likely to be considering their future options). Post-pandemic, it is not immediately clear at the moment how much of this has been or will be resumed. But there is certainly a case, given the high percentage of NCIS members who are historians of some sort, for using these tools to reestablish and reassert Independent Scholar visibility in the history profession.[9]

And the effort may end up having to be, to a degree, bottom up, because from the top down, impetus towards real change has so far appeared to be happening more on paper than in practice. For example, in 2019 the AHA Executive Council passed a resolution "to support, encourage, and engage the thousands of history scholar working off the higher education tenure track in a variety of settings." The resolution specifically included the assertion that "those historians should be welcomed into AHA leadership roles and considered in the selection of members of the prize and fellowship committees" – the latter a move that might help scholars applying for said prizes and fellowships receive more equitable consideration. The resolution also mentioned that non-tenure stream scholars should be included in the editorial process for the AHA's "premiere publications" (presumably including *The American Historical Review*, the most prestigious history journal published in the United States). Additionally, the resolution called for the increase of the AHA's "own efforts to generate specialized training, funding opportunities geared towards their research goals and promote collaborative research between scholars working inside and outside higher education." The last of these, in other words, was a call to bring in Independent Scholars as more equal research partners and collaborators – significant in its own way in a field in which so much research is solo, but also opening up the possibility of more research opportunities for Independent Scholars via collaboration with those inside the academy who are more likely to have access to external funding sources in addition to institutional ones.[10]

But if justice is to begin at home for the AHA, as for any scholarly organization, how have things gone in practice? When it comes to leadership and access to the levers of power within the organization, as long as the nominating committee controls who is put forth for high office, tenure-stream scholars may predominate. Yet more recently there have been signs of real change: in the most recent Council election, some offices featured candidates with career backgrounds other than steady tenure-stream academic appointments. This appeared especially true of candidates for the nominating committee, which portends well for the future. Part of this may be due to a concern for greater diversity of candidates in general. How much this will benefit Independent Scholars remains to be seen (beyond the reality that women and scholars of color are still less likely to be found in tenure-stream appointments). But the growing awareness on the part of the candidates themselves (as indicated in platform statements) of historians with contingent or other non-tenure stream status (not to mention candidates whose own career paths have included contingent or otherwise non-tenure track academic positions) is hopeful.[11]

Beyond the AHA, however, it is important to consider what has (or has not) been going on in other humanities-focused learned societies, including those whose mission has been more open and responsive to the needs of non-tenure track scholars. One prime example is the Organization of American Historians (OAH), which was founded in 1907 as the Mississippi Valley Historical Association with a mission that was pointedly counter to the Eastern focus and biases of the AHA.[12] From the beginning, the OAH had more of a public history focus than the AHA and was intended to reach a broader swath of history practitioners beyond gentleman scholars and academics, deliberately including public historians and pre-college history teachers. Yet the OAH, like so many of these learned societies, has over the decades moved towards a more academic focus, with only a recent pushback. Beyond the field of history, the Modern Language Association has had similar history from its founding in 1883 as a forum for the discussion of and advocacy for modern (as opposed to classical) languages and literature, becoming primarily an academic/professional organization, albeit one that advocates for the humanities at large. Another example of a major American learned society is the American Philosophical Association, (est. 1900) which, over its long history, has gone from being primarily a forum for discussion and promotion (in other words, not too different from the European Royal Societies) to primarily an academic/professional organization. There are of course, other examples, as well as the smaller disciplinary organizations that are of more recent vintage, but this hopefully gives an idea of how most learned societies over the last century moved in the direction of focusing on academia. However, before examining the extent to which Independent Scholars today fit in and what change has taken place/still can take place, it is helpful to look at how the current model(s) of Independent Scholarship have emerged in the last several decades.[13]

Independent scholarship, as practiced as matter of necessity in the modern era has been a very gendered phenomenon that in many ways began, ironically, during the "golden age" of the university, in which secure academic employment was not offered to all—and especially not to the wives of many university-affiliated scholars. Beyond the stereotype of the "faculwife" devoted to advancing her husband's career, there were, in the last couple of generations, many cases of women whose degrees and qualifications were equal to those of their husbands, but due to anti-nepotism rules that primarily seemed to affect degreed women, were shut out of anything more than contingent employment at the institutions at which their husbands worked. Many banded together for support, founding the regional Independent Scholarly societies whose founding in major university communities were shaped by more than the local availability of scholarly resources. By the 1980s, the leaders of a number of these groups, such as the Princeton Research Forum and the Institute for Historical Study, came together to found the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, for reasons that included the ability to reach Independent Scholars who had no such local organizations. As NCIS has evolved and grown over the decades, some of these regional organizations have folded for declining membership, but many continue as partner (as they are called now, rather than affiliate) organizations of NCIS. Though it is not clear what long-term effect the recent pandemic has had on these organizations, during the pandemic, NCIS and its British partner, Forum for Independent Research Endeavours (FIRE-UK) has hosted a number of webinars and other virtual activities that have helped support and maintain the Independent Scholarly community.

In recent decades, the organization has diversified to include scholars of color, younger scholars, and male scholars, and the breadth of the resulting scholarship presented in recent conferences and published in the organization's now fully fledged peer-reviewed journal, *The Independent Scholar*, reflects the breadth of backgrounds and experiences of the NCIS membership. This is doubly important, as scholars of color have been additionally historically marginalized from the academy, including within feminist-oriented ones, as was made so painfully apparent in the recent racist incident that roiled the Berkshire Conference on Women's History, with a white female leader's outrageous suggestion that being a minority would have somehow been advantageous, when scholars of color still face discrimination in the ever-shrinking number of tenure-stream faculty jobs available. That said, even white male Independent Scholars beyond the 19th-century period of the gentleman scholar have not always arrived at this status by choice. One of the best-known examples was the late Staughton Lynd (1929-2022). In addition to being an academic, this former Yale professor had a storied career as an activist in labor, civil rights, and antiwar efforts. And when his activism, and activism-infused (though always solid) scholarship drew negative attention from the FBI he was eventually forced out of the academy. He became a lawyer to support himself, and continued his activism as a labor lawyer, but also continued his scholarship, authoring several scholarly books that postdated his academic career.[14]

But Lynd may be the exception that proves the rule of the other side of the gendered model of Independent Scholarship, which is described in the first Independent Scholars' guide, edited by Ronald Gross, a former academic who was reported to have been happiest when writing for the general public. In his *Independent Scholar's Handbook*, Gross presented Independent Scholarship as a choice, rather than an adjustment to being shut out of the academy. To a degree, this represented a healthy corrective in an age when many Ph.Ds., are looking at this option even before graduating and trying to "make it" in the increasingly shrinking academy. In addition to an entrepreneurial emphasis, it also somewhat more disturbingly takes an "anyone can do it" approach that would seem to dismiss credentialism and downplay the very professionalism that is at the heart of being taken seriously as an Independent Scholar in a scholarly world that is still dominated by an ever-diminishing tenure-stream elite. His sounder advice was that, when choosing areas of interest, to look beyond the "low-hanging fruit" and the fashionable topics that are too often partly research in pursuit of tenure.[15] The bottom line is that there are multiple paths to Independent Scholarship which increasingly includes academics who "made it" and have later chosen to leave the academy but not scholarly work.

However, the question that remains for the non-superstar Independent Scholars (i.e. most of us) is how to navigate the world of scholarly societies and academic conferences that still assume tenure-stream employment as the norm, or at least the desired norm. Despite the increased presence and visibility of Independent Scholars labeled as such on conference programs, the social, and to a degree, networking side of conference-going is still affected by institutional affiliation or lack thereof. Indeed, for scholars using the "independent" label of necessity on account of being between jobs, it can make things harder to seek employment going through the conference channels (inasmuch as conferences remain part of the job search process in the age of Zoom and other remote technology), due to the not always implicit assumption that, despite evidence of prodigious scholarship, one's scholarship can't be very good if one doesn't have an academic affiliation. Indeed, according to Megan Kate Nelson, the label of "Independent Scholar" still carries enough stigma that there are those who have legitimate reasons to reject the label. For that reason, therefore, it may come down to choosing how to self-identify, and the different choices of non-traditionally affiliated scholars should be honored. This is especially true if it can be considered that the shrinking numbers of tenure-stream faculty does not automatically make the Independent Scholar label more acceptable. How the full acceptance and equalization of Independent Scholars will shape out within the scholarly world remains an open question.[16]

But the so far barely halted, let alone reversed decline of the American university makes the question an increasingly urgent one. And on the upside, the combined trends of adjunctification, downsizing, and voluntary quitting mean there is a growing awareness of the existence of Independent Scholars and of the quality of their work. In the case of the last of these, beyond the "quit lit" that usually assumes leaving the world of scholarship altogether, the most significant shift in awareness is towards the understanding that leaving the academy does not automatically mean leaving scholarly pursuits. For those who have left tenured posts, especially in a time of academic downsizing, it may be a case of jumping rather than waiting to be pushed, but even then it may include an awareness of one's options.

In light of this awareness, not only on the part of ex-academics who have actively chosen this path, but their colleagues who stay put, there has been a gradual shift away from handwringing and pitying victim-blaming to recognizing Independent Scholarship as a genuine option. Part of it has been brought about, as well it should, by the increased centering of the voices of Independent Scholars themselves. But with this recognition, as welcome as it is, there needs to be (and in some cases has been) an awareness of the lingering disadvantages Independent Scholars face, not merely in terms of presenting scholarship, but in conducting it in the first place. Aside from the reality of, in most cases, not being paid to do this work (a consideration for most contingent faculty scholars as well), many grant-awarding organizations and institutions have been slow to catch up with many full-time research fellowships limited to full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty. Part of the issue is their purpose of salary replacement during a semester or year taken off to research and/or write, something that is cogent to ensuring that academic faculty continue to produce, especially if their advancement or even continued employment depends on their publishing. However, the fact that some organizations, including, notably, the National Center for Humanities, have found ways to include non-tenure stream scholars, may indicate that bias, as much as practical need, may figure into this kind of exclusion.[17]

Still, the potential for – and actuality of change remains out there. The designation of Independent Scholar is no longer as unusual as it was even a decade ago, so that "fig leaf" affiliations, while still desirable in some circumstances, seem less necessary than in times past. Also, at least from personal experience, Independent Scholar status seems to require less explanation nowadays, and assumptions about this status may not always be what they once were. That said, there are still many non-tenure track academic scholars whose alternate form of employment (archives, library, nonprofit etc.) is their chosen affiliation identifier, though the category of Independent Scholar is broad enough to include them as well. And for those who don't have such suitable alternative affiliations, whether on account of being self-employed or having a day job that would not seem to fit in with scholarly pursuits, this is where NCIS can step into the breach. In my own experience, and no doubt in the experience of others, NCIS has proven its usefulness as an automatic affiliation, especially in instances where some sort of affiliation is required, as in several academic webinars I have taken part in – though even then, things can be complicated, when department as well as institutional affiliation is asked for ("N/A" so far has done the trick). But again, all of the above can vary between organizations, of which I will present an unscientific survey.

I will begin by pointing out that when it comes to the place of Independent Scholars in discipline-specific learned societies, some seem more naturally attuned to the existence of scholars from outside academia than others, and this goes beyond the expected distinctions between STEM disciplines and the humanities, or even the social sciences versus the humanities. Good examples from within the humanities include the Association for Jewish Studies, the Society for Christian Ethics and the Society for Jewish Ethics, whose programs regularly feature clergy-scholars (though to be sure, there is still the subset of academic clergy among those). A somewhat different example is the Labor and Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA), whose members include practicing labor and social justice activists as well as academic scholars in the field.

But regardless of the degree of visibility of Independent Scholars in these organizations, one of the most visible signs of change has been more official attention to and support for the postdoctoral unfunded – an at least tacit understanding that for many scholars need may not end with graduate student status (or even be the greatest as a graduate student). Some scholarly organizations now offer conference travel grants that are specifically targeted to contingent faculty and/or unaffiliated scholars, in addition to those long offered to graduate students. Yet some of these grants are also intended for graduate as well as postgraduate scholars, despite the problems of lumping the two together, namely: 1. Graduate students may have other sources of support through their departments that Independent Scholars would not (and even most contingent faculty might not), and 2. Graduate student status is expected to be temporary, whereas contingent and/or Independent Scholar status may be career-long.

While some of these grants are rather minimal when it comes to defraying actual costs of conference attendance, they can have immense symbolic value: for Independent Scholars, a grant award is something to put on their CV, and the organization is putting their money where their mouth is when it comes to valuing Independent Scholar conference participation. Essentially, it is a case of anything that helps get Independent Scholars and their work on conference programs, giving both increased visibility, speaks well of the scholarly organizations that make it a tangible priority.

Beyond conference travel grants, other career advancement services that learned societies may offer might offer mixed blessings to Independent Scholars. Mentorship and early career support is just such another issue, intended as it is for those newly out of graduate school or about to finish; this can be fine if "the independent track" was your intention all along, as opposed to where you might have ended up. In addition, the tenure-track focus of many mentorship programs also illustrates their limitations and make a case for including those who have achieved success outside traditional academia. As mentors, such scholars could be valuable role models, both for those who are just starting out and those whose careers could benefit from a "mid-course correction." Almost as an aside, learned societies that maintain a Distinguished Speakers program would benefit all scholars in the field by including Independent Scholars who meet the scholarly qualifications, as is the case currently with the Organization of American Historians, whose latest Distinguished Lectureship Program roster includes Independent Historian James M. Banner, Jr.[18]

The OAH has also been one of the more forward-looking organizations when it comes to moving beyond handwringing to seriously addressing Independent Scholar/Contingent Faculty issues, and has been particularly good in creating listening sessions and workshops. Other organizations have shown mixed progress, including LAWCHA, in committees dedicated to Independent Scholar issues. Efforts like this, including one on which I briefly served with LAWCHA have been helpful, but still do not fully address the question of whether Contingent Faculty and Independent Scholar interests and issue are always identical. That said, in recent times, there appears to be a merger of the two with the existence of the Committee on Contingent Faculty, Community College Faculty, and Independent Scholar Issues (whose chair, Clare Goldstene, identifying as an Independent Scholar is a recent LAWCHA Board member). But even the AHA, with its continued limited promotion of Independent Scholars to leadership (except of certain eligible divisions), is getting better about facilitating non-tenure stream attendance and participation. Also, both the AHA and OAH are starting to offer travel grants to contingent faculty, Independent Scholars, and "the un/underemployed," though they are still shared with graduate students.[19]

But even with this growing independent/contingent norm in scholarly societies, inclusion in the power structures, down to panel chairs and commentators is still a work in progress. In larger organizations, especially, one of the keys to real change is to getting on the funny-sounding but vital committee on committees, responsible for the formation of ad hoc and – more importantly – standing committees, increasing the occurrence of those devoted to Independent Scholar and/or contingent faculty issues. Likewise, and in some ways more importantly, getting onto nominating committees can increase the probability of getting Independent Scholars nominated to top organizational offices; write-in candidacies can help draw attention to the issue, but may only be moderately successful in creating lasting change. It may be best to start with smaller, more specialized societies (those more likely to be populated by Independent Scholars) before further tackling major organizations. There is also a case to be made for devoting one's energies to the organizations that are more likely to be attuned to the existence and the needs of scholars whose daytime work and scholarship takes place outside the traditional academic tenure stream.

MAKING OUR MARK ON THE LANDSCAPE

Having assessed how we have gotten here, I am offering the following suggestions for what we can each do to improve the situation.

First, do stay engaged—get involved in the learned societies that speak to your field(s), and maintain what active participation you can at their conferences. There's more out there than there used to be when it comes to options for conference participation, and the post-pandemic desire to return to "normal" could open the much-needed window for change. And when it comes to getting on the program, don't wait to be asked, but take charge in organizing panels, roundtables, lightning sessions, etc.; when possible, get recognized independent or otherwise non-tenure stream scholars engaged as chairs and commentators. If conference travel is difficult for financial or health reasons, see if virtual participation is possible (one of the lasting more positive consequences of the Covid pandemic). If in-person participation is preferred or required, don't be ashamed to apply for offered travel grants and other aid the sponsoring organizations might offer – it will also ensure that these organizations continue to recognize the needs of post-graduate scholars. In addition, depending on what's possible in your field, make a point of supporting those organizations that are more inclusive of Independent Scholars, and when it isn't possible, seek allies and push for change within organizations that are less so.

Second, seek to make change where it is really going to make a difference. Don't settle for write-in candidacies unless there is no other option, but seek to get onto nominating committees to make sure that Independent Scholars and contingent faculty are represented among nominees for office. This may be easier in some societies than other others, and even with recent progress, it may still be easier to focus on smaller organizations, or those likely to include an occupationally diverse membership. Beyond opening avenues to leadership, as indicated earlier, the redundant-sounding committee on committees is important to get involved with, the better to be sure that ad hoc (or better yet, standing) committee and other efforts are given sustained attention to issues that affect Independent Scholars, as well as other scholars with less than equal support for their scholarship. Additionally, for those learned societies that have peer-reviewed journals attached to them, it is important to push for inclusion, not just as peer reviewers or book reviewers, but as members of editorial boards, further creating representation in the process of peer-reviewed publishing.

Third, and simultaneously, join and support NCIS, and use it proudly as an affiliation, even when not required. As NCIS has grown and revitalized, be aware how much NCIS *is* a "real" learned society, with a peer-reviewed journal, as well as small grants and awards, professional opportunities, and a variety of services available to its members, both in person and virtually. The NCIS grant programs to support research and conference attendance have been increased to have more than symbolic value, as has the Elizabeth Eisenstein award for best essay written by an NCIS member in the previous year. 2023 also saw the addition of the David Sonnenschein Award and the Amanda Haste Award for various aspects of research and professional support for members. Members' accomplishments and participation in a variety of scholarly activities serve to increase NCIS's legitimacy as a scholarly society that is in some ways closest to the model of the Royal Societies of old: scholars and scholarly exchange in a variety of disciples by scholars who work outside the academy. As NCIS has become increasingly international, the organization has mastered the virtual seminar, on a variety of topics, both research-specific and professionally, and is planning hybrid conferences so that all can attend, either in person or remotely, thus creating more opportunities for Independent Scholar colleagues to meet one another, and to see and hear the variety of scholarship that Independent Scholars conduct.

Fourth, make alliances with scholars from other marginalized sectors within academia, even beyond contingent faculty, most specifically faculty from minority-serving institutions who may have similar concerns about equal access and similarly lack resources to make themselves present and heard in larger scholarly organizations. This is more than self-serving, given that women and/or non-white minorities are still the most likely to be practicing scholarship off the tenure-track, and the predominantly minority faculty of many HBCU's and other minority-serving institutions may be more likely to have higher teaching loads and fewer research resources. This will redound to NCIS's benefit in terms of making sure that the increasingly diversified organization continues to practice its own version of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In conclusion, the effort to make learned societies more representative of their constituencies will benefit not only Independent Scholars but all scholars who are not part of the ever-shrinking tenure-stream elite. By increasing recognition and support for scholars from outside academia, it will also encourage greater recognition of their scholarship by colleagues within the academy. And given the forces affecting American colleges and universities these days, today's learned societies may end up best serving themselves when they remember their extra-university roots in the royal societies of old.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH LATE-BLOOMING RESEARCHERS

Linda Baines (UNITED KINGDOM)

Acknowledgements *Thank you to the participants who shared their experiences of how they became a late-blooming researcher, and their experiences of being one. Without them, this chapter could not and would not have been written. My conversations with them were exhilarating and rewarding. Each of their stories are unique and impressive. I have anonymised all of them for the sake of confidentiality, and I have disguised relevant details, such as their location and universities or other organisations or places to which they may refer.*

Content warning *For those of a sensitive academic disposition, this chapter contains few references, academic or otherwise. This an explorative, empirical, pragmatic study of late-blooming researchers and scholars who are referred to as 'LBRs'. This is not an exhaustive or conclusive study. The author undertook the research because she was prompted by her own experience of coming to research later in life, and she was curious about whether other individuals like her existed. To her joy and satisfaction, she has found that they do.*

INTRODUCTION

Many Independent Scholars are late bloomers; they catch the research bug later in life, after acquiring professional experience, and often having had a career outside academia. It is not always obvious how or why late-blooming scholars flower like this; little has been written about them. However, it is an expanding band; groups such as PhD OWLs (Older Wiser Learners) and NCIS on Facebook are flourishing.

This chapter seeks to explore the experiences, motivation and challenges of Independent Scholars and researchers who are late-blooming researchers (LBRs) outside academia or who came to academia late. I wanted to see whether it was possible to answer the following kinds of questions. How do late-blooming scholars arrive at where they are? What gives them the urge to get into research and often to pursue a higher degree? So, this chapter explores the experiences of several late-blooming researchers from around the world, looking at their motivations, their experience of studying, of researching, the challenges they face, and how they see themselves.

Defining a Late-Blooming Researcher

I can see you asking who or what is a "Late-Blooming Researcher"? Let me try to explain. A Late-Blooming Researcher may:

- often come to research later in life, often while or after working in another career, sector or role;
- undertake a PhD straight or soon after completing their undergraduate or Masters studies, then go to work in another sector and comes back to research later in their life;
- decide to undertake doctoral research later in life; and
- already be an independent researcher.

Methodology

This was an exploratory pilot study. I recruited participants by posting an invitation in four Facebook groups early in November 2021. These Facebook groups were: WIASN (Women in Academia Support Network), PhD OWLs (PhD Older Wiser Learners), NCIS, and Forum for Independent Researcher Endeavours (FIRE-UK).

As a result, I had conversations with eleven Late-Blooming Researchers online via Zoom between late November 2022 and end of January 2023. I used a topic guide to ensure that I covered relevant areas. Each conversation lasted 45–60 minutes. I recorded each conversation, and I used Happy Scribe (HappyScribe.com) to transcribe them. I checked the transcript against each audio recording. I used thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006, 2022) on software called Quirkos to analyse the transcripts.

Who are the Late-Blooming Researchers here?

Eleven independent researchers participated in the research. Among these research participants ("participants"), eight were female and three were male. Three participants were based in Australia, five participants were located in Northern Europe, one was based in East Asia, one in Africa and one in South America. Seven participants had completed their PhD; two participants were studying for their PhD; one participant had already had a PhD and was studying for a second one, and one participant had a Masters degree. Figure 1 offers an overview of the participants.

Participants had a wide range of research interests. Some of these were lifelong passions or interests or sparked by particular life experiences. For example, Leon's research, focused on men and masculinity, stemmed from personal experience. For Sarah, her lived experience of disability and as an activist encouraged her interdisciplinary research. Some participants' research interests stemmed from issues which they had encountered during their careers. For example, Adele's experience of being involved in environmental issues while working in the public sector led her to focus on climate finance for her second PhD. After several years as a teacher, Heid focused on influencing changes in Government policy about approaches to teaching children who faced particular educational challenges. Fiona built on her professional experience as a technology consultant to explore how design processes could support the design of technology. Some participants explored issues and questions which had long interested them. Annika explored her interest in how and why people have different competencies and skills, and how to manage gaps in skills.

Adele's doctoral research started out in one direction and evolved.

> *It started out being on the Paris Agreement, but it sort of turned into a project about climate finance …* (Adele**)**

Sarah described her research interests as EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) studies and undertaking research in the communities in which she was embedded. She realised that voices like hers needed to be heard, their stories had to be shared.

> *I started the research because in EDI studies there's a lot of focus on sort of discrimination studies but I was meeting more and more people who were saying, nobody is sharing my story or a story of someone like me, and when I read books, I don't see people like me, which was what the book that I wrote was finally all about, sharing stories of people like them and like me….* (Sarah)

Jenny's research focused on how the funding policy framework in particular parts of the welfare system affected behaviour within the sectors.

> *I'm looking at the funding policy framework around two of our largest sectors in the welfare system …. And I'm going to be arguing that that's sort of the actual policy itself, which is based on market principles of supply and demand, is flawed and it's not enabling the system to work effectively ……..* (Jenny)

Heidi's research interests focused on how children with educational needs were supported in the classroom.

> *It's funny - I jumped ship at the moment where things are still shifting a bit. So, I started out based on how kids were supported in the classroom, and how teachers deal with it...* (Heidi)

Chris had a research interest in doctoral education.

> *I've written a fair bit on doctoral education simply because of my own experience and what I saw going on with the doctoral students around the world.* (Chris)

Figure 1: Participants - Late-Blooming Researchers

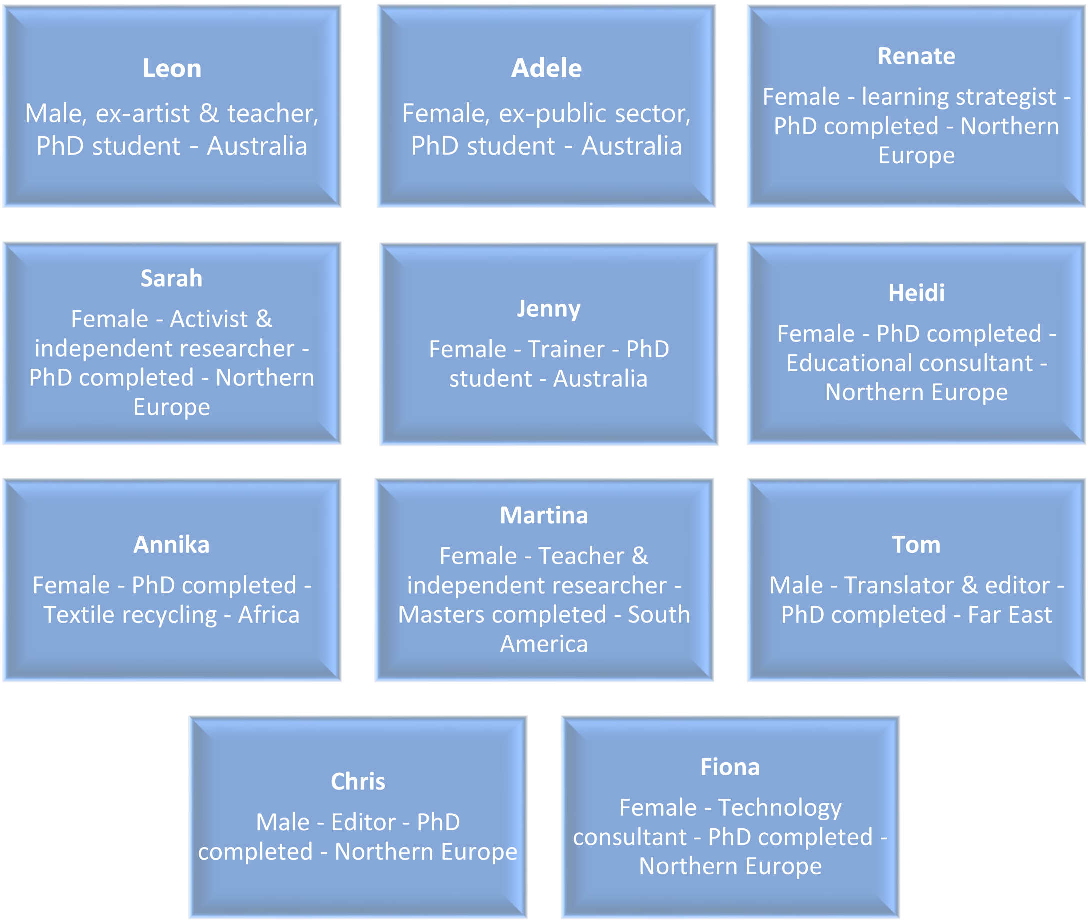
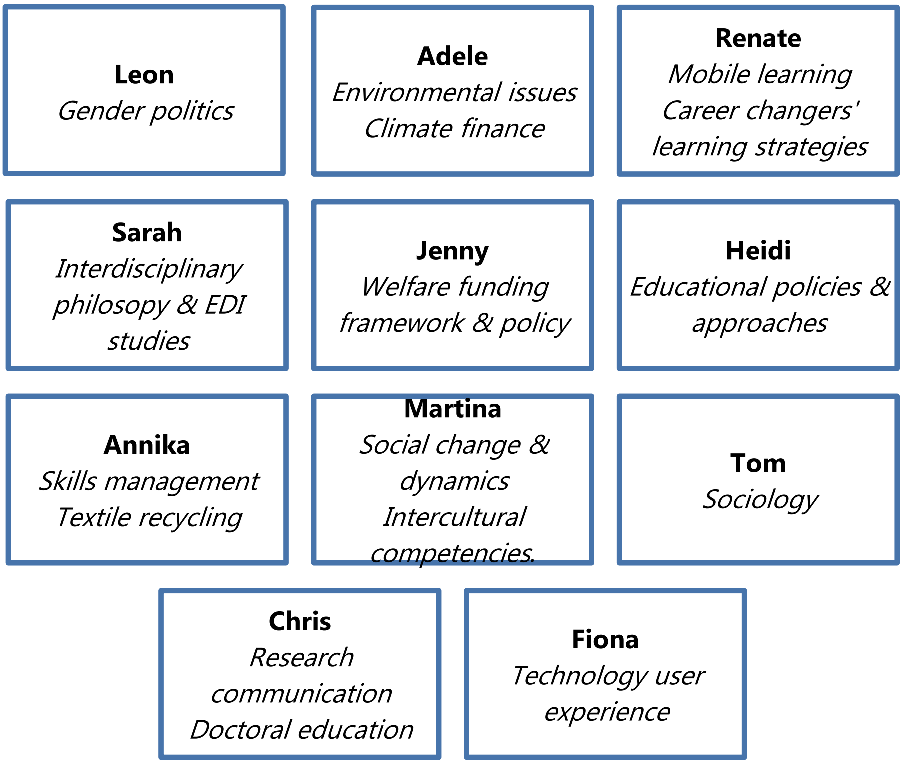


Figure 2: Late-Blooming Researchers - research interests



HOW LATE-BLOOMING RESEARCHERS EMERGE

Late-Blooming Researchers emerge in different ways, sometimes during their careers, or after they have left full-time work. Many participants had either become independent researchers or were doing so. Of those seven participants who were fully independent researchers (Renate, Sarah, Heidi, Annika, Tom, Chris and Fiona), all of them pursued their research interests alongside other paid work. Table 1 summarises how participants became or were moving to become late-blooming researchers.

Most participants were working when they started their PhD (Renate, Sarah, Jenny, Heidi, Annika, Chris, and Fiona). Two participants had just left work or retired when they started their PhD (Leon and Adele). Adele and Tom went to graduate school after their first degree and then worked outside academia; Adele was now undertaking a second PhD. Martina, who worked in academia and did not have a PhD, was developing a career as an independent researcher and consultant as well. Some participants, like Annika, had also moved on in their careers or were exploring new options.

Table 1: Participants: emerging as researchers

Participant	Emerging an independent researcher
Leon	Retired ex-teacher and artist. Undertaking PhD to explore issues which had fascinated him for many years, particularly in the light of some difficult personal experiences
dele	Left the public sector early and was undertaking a PhD to explore issues which she had encountered during her career and in which she professional experience
Renate	Communications and learning strategist, who became fascinated by research and wanted to change the direction of her life. Studied for a Masters degree by distance learning in mid-career and then undertook a PhD
Sarah	Became an independent researcher after retraining and found a way to connect activism with research in her particular community. Now a consultant while undertaking independent research
Jenny	Started to undertake research to use the knowledge she gained in her career as a way to explore options for change in the sector in which she works. She now works part-time as a consultant
Heidi	After working for several years, she realised that changes were needed; government policy was not effective. Became a researcher as a way to influence policymakers about changing approaches to teaching children with particular needs. Now a consultant
Annika	Pursued research to explore issues which had long fascinated her after working for some years in management. Now seeking to establish a new enterprise and career in a different sector and exploring ways to integrate her research skills into her new identity
Martina	Worked in community research in a cultural organisation for several years focusing on participatory methods. Now teaches research methods in academia and is establishing her career as an independent researcher and consultant
Tom	Studied for his PhD straight after his Bachelors degree. He migrated and worked in advertising in a large corporate organisation, undertaking independent research alongside. Now runs a small family business and fits research around his other commitments
Chris	Became an independent researcher after working in healthcare. He published a book on his research alongside undertaking his PhD. Pursues independent research alongside running a small business
Fiona	Opted not to pursue a PhD in her twenties, she worked for many years in design technology. She completed two Masters degrees and after a long career, she decided to pursue her PhD abroad. Now a consultant and independent researcher

Sarah had become disabled some years previously and had to retire early. She was also a disability activist, very much involved in her community. After several years, she decided to retrain and found a Masters course on disability studies. Sarah liked the way the course brought activism, theory and research together, and then, she decided to pursue a PhD.

> *And I particularly loved the research and it felt like a way of sort of using my skills but also making the research useful to people. The discussions we had in EDI research methods courses was about research that's useful to people who are discriminated again that we can disseminate to them in ways they can use and kind of breaking down some of those elite barriers where it's published far away from people.* (Sarah)

Chris's research career started when he became fascinated how and why posters are presented at research conferences.

> *But my research career came from attending a conference, presenting a poster. . I began to wonder why people spent vast amounts of money going to these conferences presenting posters when people were going to walk past them, and they weren't necessarily available after the event. And so, I got speaking to people and I got into researching conferences and scientific communication, but nobody else did it, and so it was down to me. And so, I sort of have been this sort of sole researcher from day one.* (Chris)

WHY UNDERTAKE A PHD?

Participants varied in their reasons for undertaking a PhD and/or what they hoped to gain from it (and some participants have more than one reason). Table 2 summarises participants' reasons for undertaking doctoral research.

As Table 2 indicates, participants undertook doctoral research for many different reasons. For example. Leon:

> *I needed something to fill my time meaningfully.* (Leon)

Jenny decided that she wanted to undertake a PhD to use the knowledge she had gained working in the third sector.

> *It's sort of capstoneing, using the knowledge I've gained through working in the sector to try and just get hold of it and give it a shake, and maybe change the future in one small [way].* (Jenny)

Heidi undertook a PhD because she wanted to be able to influence policy makers on educational issues that she was concerned about.

> *And then my aim of my PhD was not to be like a proper university, like a true academic. I wanted to influence the government.* (Heidi)

Annika wanted to undertake a PhD because she was passionate about her topic.

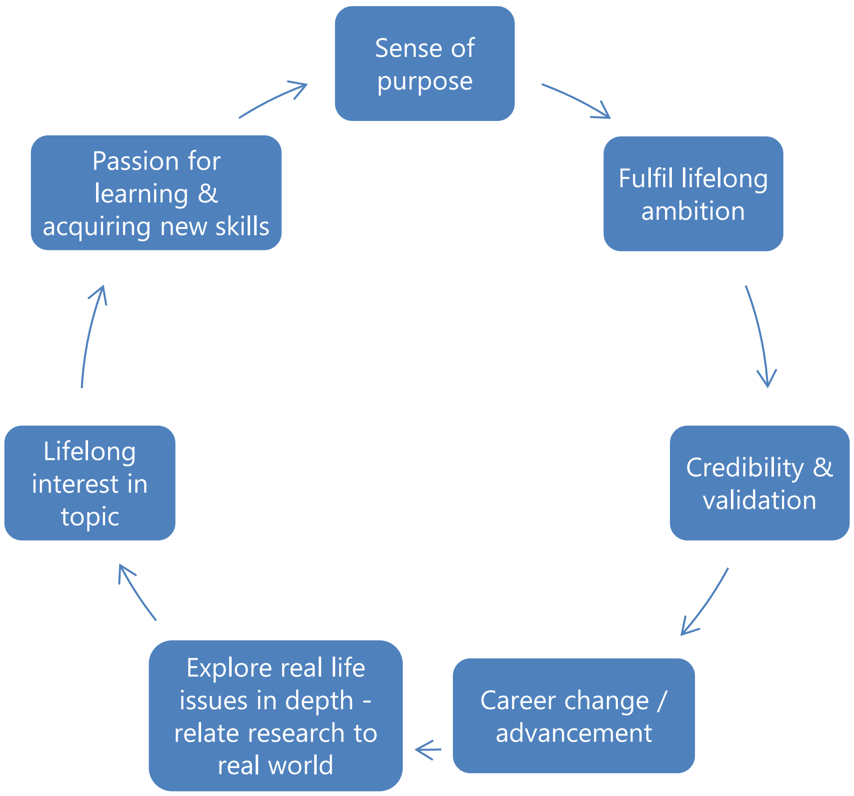
> *And I'm saying this now from both what it means to me, because it was so passionate, it was something that I've been observing for so many years, it's something I so wanted to understand and develop. It was such a deep-seated thing that came with me for so long.* (Annika)

Table 2: Motivations /Reasons for undertaking doctoral research

Participant	Why undertake a PhD
Leon	• Needed something to fill his time • Studying a PhD to enable him to continue to be a researcher • Credibility to be able to keep writing • Validation as an independent researcher
Adele	• Explore issues she had been involved in and dealt with during her career
Renate	• Strengthening the theoretical foundations of her research and to explore an issue/interest related to her career • To learn more deeply, at a deeper level
Sarah	• Getting the voices of research participants heard
Jenny	• Undertaking a PhD for its own sake. Wanted to relate her research [topic] to the real world
Heidi	• To influence policy makers, the government about educational issues she is concerned about • Credibility
Annika	• Passionate about her topic.
Martina	• Gain accreditation as a researcher
Chris	• Academic credibility, to verify his research and ideas
Fiona	• Fulfil life-long wish, and gain credibility and acknowledgement from peers

These motivations for undertaking a PhD are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Motivations for undertaking a PhD



KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE PARTICIPANTS BRING TO UNDERTAKING A PHD

Participants felt that they brought different skills and experience to research, as illustrated in Table 3.

Leon felt that waiting 20 years had made an enormous difference to their research.

> *Look, I think even waiting 20 years has made an enormous difference that the PhD, the research and the writing I'm doing now is a completely different animal than what I was doing in the early 90s when I was first doing it. So, it's interesting that the topic is exactly the same and the title is pretty well exactly the same, but the interpretation and the methodology and the whole approach is, I think, much more profound, much more reasonable.* (Leon)

Adele had more self-confidence than she had when she did her first PhD.

> *I'm less intimidated by academics in general than in my twenties. I suppose you have more confidence in terms of your own ideas and presenting and speaking.* (Adele)

Sarah brought teaching skills and teaching experience to her PhD.

> *I brought teaching skills. I did quite a lot of teaching, which I think I kind of was noticed by my supervisor, somebody who already knew how to teach and have a conversation. So that was good...* (Sarah)

Jenny felt she brought particular skills and experience to her research.

> *I think certainly my work skills in terms of public speaking helps a lot because I feel like I'm giving a presentation every two or three months, so that helps. And certainly, the maturity to be a little bit more self-driven. I think being a mature age student, that's really helping me in that it's my own motivation and it's me driving me.* (Jenny)

Heidi felt that her professional experience strengthened her research.

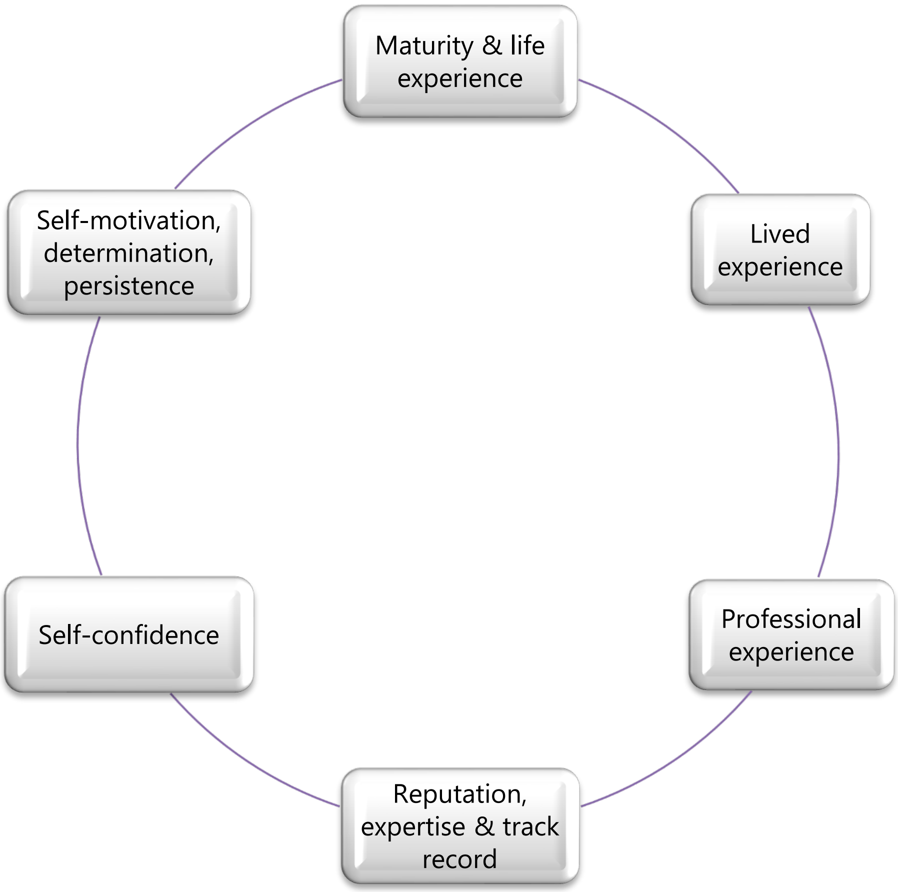
> *I'd worked in the classroom .... I think that's facilitated building bridges through research. I understand school culture, so I could kind of reach out to schools better. And at the time I was still in the classroom, so I have credibility and time management ...... (Heidi)*

Table 3: Participants: Knowledge, skills and experience

Participant	Reason
Leon	• Enriched and deeper thinking after deferring his PhD for 20 years • Researching the same topic with a very different interpretation and the methodology
Adele	• Professional background and experience • Knowledge and understanding of the subject matter area • More confidence, less intimidated by academics
Renate	• Commitment to excellence, persistence and determination
Sarah	• Teaching experience and skills • Wanting to undertake research with purpose as an activist for the benefit of her own community • Being embedded in the community she was researching • Lived experience of her topic, of different forms of activism
Jenny	• Work skills in terms of public speaking • maturity helps her to be more self-driven. Being a mature age student is ally helping her as it is own motivation • Not having a goal of a job or career is freeing
Heidi	• Teaching experience in the classroom • Lived experience of her topic helped her build bridges in the classroom
Annika	• Industry knowledge • Life experience of working in the real world – able to apply theory to practice
Chris	• Established publication track record in the field • Self-motivated, self-driven – used to working on his own
Fiona	• Professional experience • Established track record in technology use • Determination, persistence

Figure 4 summarises the kind of knowledge skills and experience that participants felt that they brought to their doctoral research.

Figure 4: Existing knowledge, skills and experience



EXPERIENCE OF UNDERTAKING A PHD

Participants had varied experiences in undertaking their doctoral research; they encountered highs and lows. Table 4 illustrates participants' experiences.

For Leon, the best part of his PhD topic was talking to his research participants.

> *Talking to the men, absolutely, talking to the men. It's just the empathy it's drawn. I really felt for the men, and also that they wanted to tell their story and I think they appreciated being heard* (Leon)

Adele found acquiring knowledge fascinating.

> *Well, I suppose apart from the sort of the acquisition of the knowledge and understanding of the subject matter area* (Adele)

Renate found that undertaking her PhD was a wonderful journey:

> *But then I started thinking about everything and I thought this was like an absolutely magnificent journey because you go through these things that none of my family has gone through, and all of a sudden you see a life that is different, and you see different dynamics and societal agreements and everything.* (Renate)

Jenny enjoyed being the oldest person in the room, often amongst other students.

> *I enjoy that aspect of it and it's multifaceted because I really get a kick out of the fact that I've gone back to be a student, I just love that. And I love being the oldest person in the room, often amongst other students. And I think that for me it's a sense of pride that you can go back and learn at any time. So, I deliberately pitch myself as a student ……* (Jenny)

For Annika, undertaking a PhD was an intense learning journey.

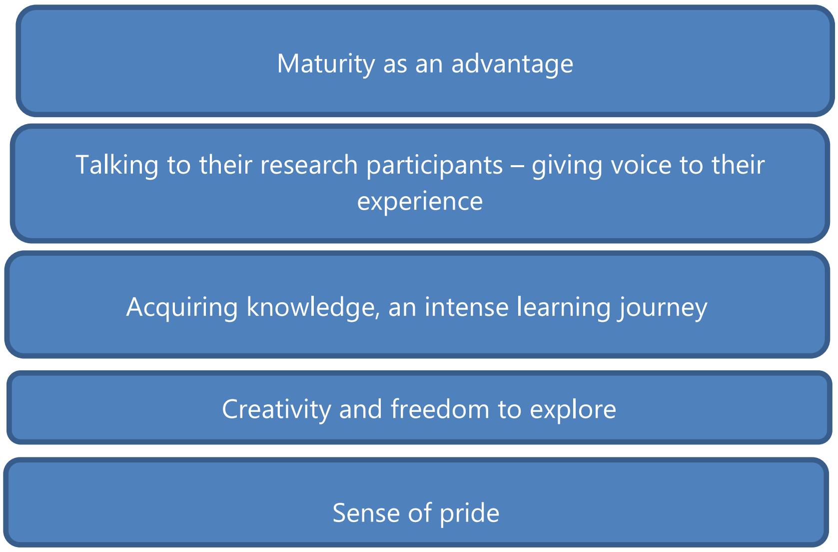
> *It was literally just an intense learning journey. But it was a personal learning journey, not a subject matter learning journey.* (Annika)

Table 4: Best part of undertaking doctoral research

Participant	**Best part of undertaking a PhD**
Leon	• Talking to his research participants
Adele	• Acquiring knowledge, learning new things and understanding her research topic, being fascinated by it • Not being intimidated by academics in the same way as when she undertook her first PhD • Self confidence in her own ideas, and in presenting and speaking • Has sometimes found herself advising other students, even though she is a distance learning PhD student • Finds getting involved in research topic-related initiatives satisfying
Renate	• Undertaking her PhD was a magnificent journey because she went through things, had experiences that none of her family had had
Sarah	• Getting the voices of research participants heard • Realising that voices like hers needed to be heard and their stories shared, and making her research accessible
Jenny	• An interesting contrast to her day job as a trainer where she had to be the expert in room, and be seen to be competent • Age is to her advantage. She is a student, a mature student
Heidi	• Being in the classroom, the networks she developed and the shared journey of hell with other PhD students
Annika	• The creativity and the freedom to develop and an intense personal learning journey

Figure 5 summarises the highlights the best parts of undertaking a PhD for participants.

Figure 5: Best part of undertaking a PhD



On the other hand, participants found undertaking doctoral research challenging, as Table 5 illustrates.

Leon found that the biggest frustration in undertaking his PhD was the bureaucracy. He also found the lack of resources, and lack of access to textbooks frustrating.

> *But the biggest frustration of being a student was the bureaucracy, and that because the system just doesn't talk to itself ……. And then also the lack of resources, no access to textbooks, for example, and the library making it very difficult.* (Leon)

Adele found that undertaking a PhD was now a more structured process.

> *Rigour, I think it's about the same. I mean, I think they hold you to the same high standards of research writing. I don't think it's harder or easier, but I would say it's a more structured process now than it was back in the day, which I think has pros and cons.* (Adele)

Renate had underestimated the highs and lows of writing.

> *Well, the thing I underestimated was the fact that while you're writing, there seems to be like this waveform where you have highs because you have this brilliant genius idea, and then you have the lows where you think, this is awful. I will never finish it, and it's impossible. But of course, you need it because through this frustration, through this anxiety, new ideas or new directions, all part of it.* (Renate)

Sarah found that there was much ableism in academia. During her PhD, she sought ways to work around her conditions and her energy levels.

There's a lot of discrimination in academia, it was useful in some ways because it made me realise that I would continue to meet discrimination and therefore maybe a career in academia wasn't for me. And it was good to know that before I tried to do a career in academia. (Sarah)

Table 5: Worst aspects of undertaking doctoral research

Participant	**Worst aspect of undertaking a PhD**
Leon	• Negotiating university systems and bureaucracy • Lack of access to the resources he needs
Adele	• Undertaking a second PhD felt more formulaic and more structured • Offered fewer opportunities than her younger peers • Having a different experience during her second PhD, partly due to being a remote student, partly due to COVID-19 • Having to seek ethics approval was an elaborate process • Research training was basic
Renate	• Underestimated the highs and lows of writing
Sarah	• Encountered and experienced discrimination in academia which created additional stress • Made her realise that a career in academia would not be feasible
Jenny	• Navigating the bureaucracy and systems at the university • Not having a cohort, hard to find a tribe • Lack of information for her as a mature student • Feeling intimidated by academics
Heidi	• Writing up her PhD was soul destroying
Annika	• Having to reduce rates for her consultancy work as she could not take on senior roles • Feeling incompetent • The constant not knowing, feeling that there is so much she did not know was a very uncomfortable experience
Chris	• When he was unable to progress his PhD for a year because he could not find anyone to get approve him to write-up his thesis
Fiona	• Researching a very niche topic • Lonely and isolating experience of undertaking a PhD in a foreign country among much younger PhD students • Feeling confused for four years, wondering whether she was doing the right thing, doing it correctly • Not being offered the same opportunities and resources as younger PhD students

Jenny found navigating the bureaucracy and systems at the university challenging and she felt isolated.

> *I've got to say the bureaucracy and navigating the systems at Uni and also not having a cohort, that's really hard. And I think also the sector I'm researching in, so third sector, it's sort of a little bit aside from the mainstream. So, finding a tribe, finding a group of people who speaks my language is a little bit difficult, so that's one thing.* (Jenny)

Jenny also found that there was a lack of information for her as a mature student.

> *I'm interested one thing about starting the PhD, and I think as a mature age student, I think in my experience, there was nothing that actually bridged an information gap for me. So, as I said, I came in really enthusiastic and I wanted to know all the things, about all the things I would be doing and that wasn't available at my university, so I was filling the gaps. But a little bit of a bridge would have really helped.* (Jenny)

For Annika, the downside of undertaking a PhD was that she had to reduce the rates that she was able to charge for her consultancy work.

> *The downside of that is it affected my rates that I was able to invoice because I couldn't take on senior roles, because I had to take junior roles at a lower rate.* (Annika)

For Chris, the worst part of his PhD was when he was unable to progress his PhD for a year.

> *But that was only because I had a complete fallow year where I couldn't find anybody to get me into write up. Somebody has to sign off the write up and say,, we're going to put you forward, you write it up and then we'll examine it* (Chris)

For Fiona, the worst part of her PhD was that she was researching a specialist topic.

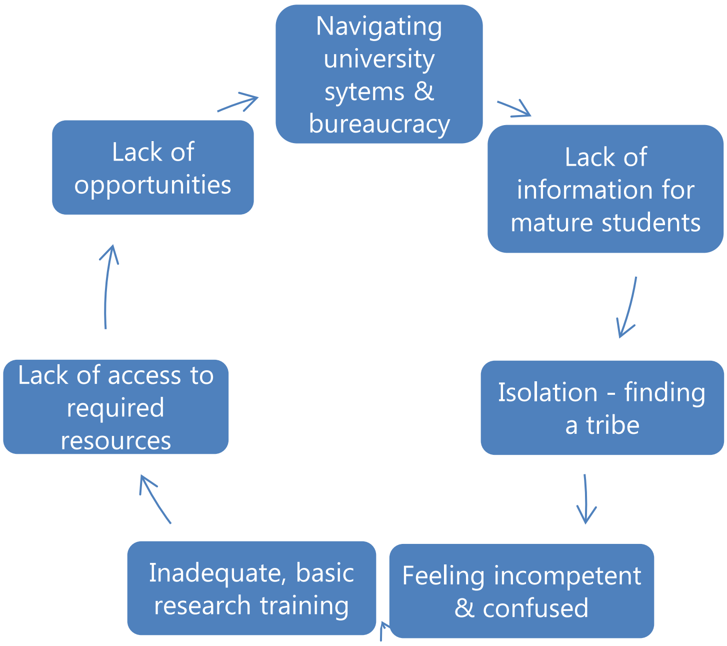
> *That's tough. It was in a way; it was the best and worst part. And that was having such a niche topic. Nobody else knew much of anything about it ..... it was difficult in that people didn't know how to take it. They didn't really get it.* (Fiona)

Fiona found undertaking a PhD difficult.

> *The pain was feeling confused for four years.* (Fiona)

Figure 6 summarises the challenges that participants encountered in undertaking doctoral research.

Figure 6: Worst part of undertaking a PhD



DIFFERENCE UNDERTAKING A PHD MADE

Despite the challenges which participants experienced during their doctoral research, they found that completing their theses brough different returns and rewards. Table 6 illustrates participants' views on the benefits of completing their PhD.

Table 6: Difference undertaking PhD made for participants

Participant	Difference undertaking PhD made
Leon	• Credibility to be able to keep writing • So that he can be an independent researcher
Adele	• Professional respect
Renate	• Deepened her learning • Gave her external validation • Transformative • Significant salary increase
Sarah	• Affected the way she was treated and how she was regarded • Has opened all kinds of doors and different kinds of opportunities had emerged • Completing a PhD has helped her build on what she was already doing and to develop skills in new, different directions • Given her an opportunity to write a book with a co-author that was based on her PhD research, which made it easier to find a publisher • Expertise and credibility

Jenny	• Can already see how her consultancy is benefiting from her doctoral research • Being recognised as smart
Heidi	• Given her confidence, credibility and kudos, opens doors and having a title gives her credibility and disarms people • Given her opportunities to undertake work that she would not have been able to do previously • Freedom and variety in her work
Annika	• Her new career includes elements of thought leadership, and she can synthesise information, make something new from it; i.e. she is good at sense making • Slowly realised that she could use the research skills she acquired during her PhD on any topic • A sense of personal achievement and the satisfaction of mastery
Tom	• Enjoys reading, discovering things, finding new ideas and how an idea in one place can fit with a problem in another space and place • Has learned not to make assumptions about what is possible and what is not, and not to be categorical about himself • Would not have been invited to teach at a university, and to conferences • Certified as a scholar and he could ignore academia - gave him a title in front of his name
Chris	• Credibility • Freedom to research what he wants
Fiona	• Credibility in the eyes of her peers

Before completing her PhD, Renate was the lowest paid person in her department.

> *Remuneration. Because I used to be the worst paid person in the department, and I coordinated it. But of course, I was willing to do it because I love the work that I did and then after the PhD, I was just asking around how much can I ask now? And it was 23% higher than my latest wage,* (Renate)

Renate found that completing her PhD gave her external validation.

> *Indeed, it's the perception of the outside validation and sometimes it's I tell that to the people I work with. .... But it's a strange thing that a title makes so much difference in terms of accepting an argument. That's kind of strange.* (Renate)

For Sarah, completing her PhD seemed to affect the way she treated.

> *It seems to really affect both the way you're treated and the way you're regarded .....* (Sarah)

Completing a PhD had benefitted Sarah in several ways: it had opened all kinds of doors; different opportunities had emerged, such as writing a book based on her research. She was able to develop her skills in new directions. She now undertook research as a form of activism, and she was now a trustee of a major organisation.

> *It has made a difference for me, but it's also helped me develop my skills in new directions. So, having always been an activist, I now do kind of research as activism... So, yeah, it's kind of built on what I was already doing to give me a whole new skill at that. And so it's opened the door to opportunities like the book that I wrote based on the research,* (Sarah)

Jenny could see how her consultancy practice was already benefiting

> *I mean, I've seen it already with my consultancy work as well as training, I also consult in some of the non-profits, so I've already seen that additional skill I've been able to put to use to a greater effect with my consultancy.* (Jenny)

Completing a PhD had given Heidi kudos, it had opened doors; having a title gave her credibility.

> *Kudos; it opens doors. . It's given me kudos.* (Heidi)

Completing her PhD had given Annika a sense of personal achievement.

> *I think a sense of personal achievement. …It gave me the satisfaction of mastery. I know some people have mastery goals and others have achievement goals. For me it was I mastered this and it's that satisfaction* (Annika)

Tom liked having the freedom to research. He had learnt not to make assumptions about what is possible and what is not, not to be categorical about himself.

> *Well, it's having to the freedom to research and also, I've learned not to be categorical about my assumptions about myself, what is possible and what is not.* (Tom)

For Tom, completing his PhD meant that he was certified as a scholar, and he could ignore academia.

> *Yeah. Because, in my case, what it seemed to work is that the PhD says, I'm certified as a scholar, So doing those allowed me to say, yes, I've ticked that box if I want it. I've got sort of a title at the front of my name, and so I can't be sort of brushed off in the same way that somebody who plays part time from a distance could necessarily be.* (Tom)

Completing a PhD has given Fiona credibility in the eyes of her peers.

> *So it has given me credibility in the sense that people in the organisation and people who are involved in the conference know that I haven't just read about it, that I've actually published on it. And it gives them more confidence in my ability to contribute to the field and to review their work and so on.* (Fiona)

Figure 7: Difference undertaking a PhD has made

IDENTITY

Self-identity is an important issue, so this section explores how participants understand and see themselves. Table 7 indicates how different participants saw or described themselves.

Table 7: How participants describe themselves

Participant	Description
Leon	• Lifelong learner • Independent researcher
Adele	• Independent consultant
Renate	• A doctor in business communications, in research communication, learning strategist and as a researcher
Sarah	• Activist researcher, storyteller and an 'independent researcher'
Jenny	• PhD student, consultant
Heidi	• Consultant and researcher, independent researcher expert, educational advisor, chair and trustee
Annika	• Uncertain, not sure, not a researcher
Martina	• An independent researcher and consultant and qualitative research, interculturality and community psychology
Tom	• A sociologist, partner in his family business translator, sometimes coffee writer
Chris	• Independent academic
Fiona	• Technology consultant • Part time researcher

Annika was no longer active in research. Although she did not describe herself as such, it was clear from our conversation that she was also a social entrepreneur and artist. Through these identities she was fostering and reconnecting herself to her research skills.

Sometimes participants described themselves in different ways, depending on to whom they were talking (Adele, Heidi).

Leon saw himself as a lifelong learner.

> *I'm a lifelong learner who loves learning and loves theorising. I was thinking, today, I was 'll thinking today about because my PhD is not fitting any particular subject matter. And I'm saying, okay, I'm a theorist. I'm not a sociologist, I'm not a psychologist. I'm a theorist...*
>
> (Leon)

For Adele, how she described herself depends a little on to whom she is talking to.

I always have trouble when people are like, what do you do? I do a few other things. Well, I do a little bit of work back with my former employer, teaching diplomatic tradecraft negotiation skills, political analysis, that sort of thing. (Adele)

Renate described herself as a doctor in business communications.

Well, Nina Simone got an honorary doctorate at a certain point in her career, and so she just received it. And from that moment onward, she insisted that she would be called Doctor. And I always remembered that as a child I saw this, and it made like an impression on me. But of course. I say, doctor in business communications, in research communication. (Renate)

Sarah sometimes called herself an activist researcher because she wanted her work to be useful. She sometimes described herself sometimes a storyteller researcher. Sarah also called herself 'independent researcher', even if it was not all paid work.

As a researcher, I sometimes call myself an activist researcher because I want my work to be useful to activist contexts, but also sometimes a storyteller researcher because I'm very interested in story. Also, independent researcher, although I feel like that's a bit of a lofty title, given that I haven't done a lot of independent research. (Sarah)

Jenny called herself a PhD student.

Yeah, it's probably more on the official title. I call myself I don't call myself a PhD candidate. I call myself a PhD student, even though I'm up for candidature now. (Jenny)

Heidi said how she identified herself depends on who asked her.

How do you ... in all honesty, it depends on whom I'm talking to: a consultant and researcher, expert, educator, advisor. I do all of it and it all informs everything, (Heidi)

Martina called herself an independent researcher and consultant.

I now call myself an independent researcher and consultant and qualitative research, interculturality and community psychology. (Martina)

Tom described himself as in various ways.

Sociologist, partner in the family business translator, sometimes writer. (Tom)

Chris identified himself an independent academic as he wrote a great deal and published.

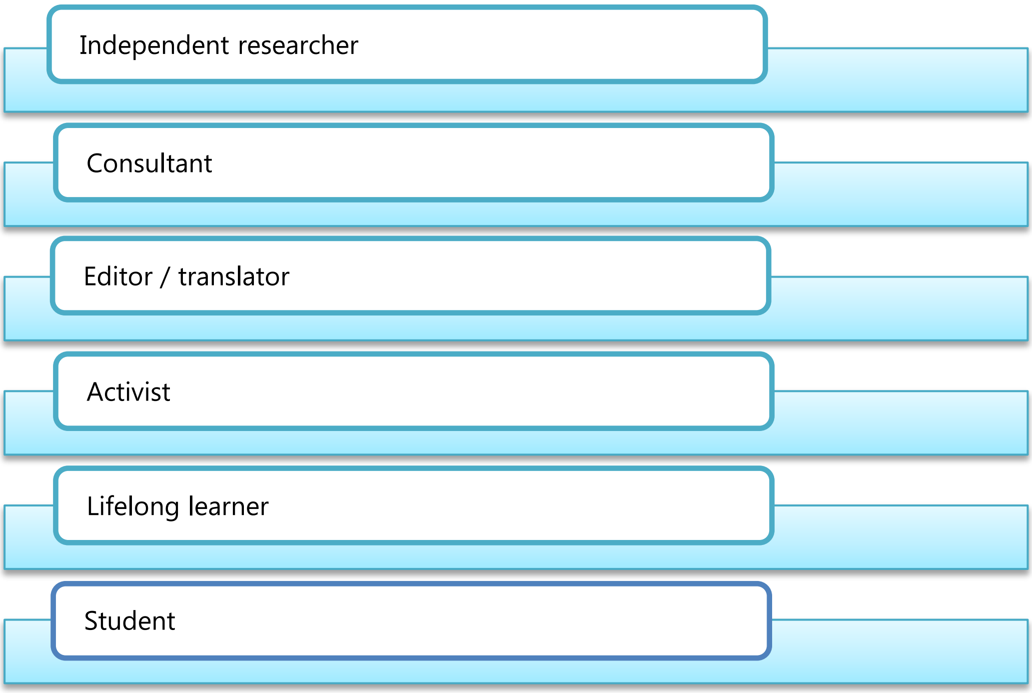
I identify myself as an independent academic because I write a lot, I publish sort of a reasonable amount, I do the odd sort of bit of teaching... (Chris)

Chris also ran a language editing business.

I took on language editing. So, I process people's academic books and articles for language and academic issues. but at heart, that's not what I did, or I do, but I am an academic and a researcher. (Chris)

Figure 8 summarises how participants identified themselves.

Figure 8: Late-Blooming Researchers - Identities / Self-perceptions



CONCLUSION

This has been a fascinating study to undertake. Talking to each participant was a delight as they each shared their experiences, perspectives and ideas. As you may appreciate, the conversations yielded much more data than I could possibly use in this chapter.

This study has three main limitations. First, the sample size was small and second, no participants were based in North America. However, the main limitation is that this chapter can only draw on some of the data that I collected. Participants' experiences of becoming late-blooming researchers are much richer and more complex than I can do justice to here. The data was so rich that. if there was room in this IS Guide, I would be able to write another chapter on LBRs and their experiences. This chapter can only offer a taster of how individuals move to become late-blooming researchers.

As this was a preliminary exploratory study, there are opportunities for further research. A future study could usefully include Late-Blooming Researchers based in North America. To enable greater comparison, future research could also consider using alternative research methods. For example, holding small focus groups where participants could discuss and compare their experiences of becoming Late-Blooming Researchers. Conducting a qualitative survey could yield interesting responses as well.

There is much more to say about Late-Blooming Researchers; our numbers are increasing and many more of us are undertaking research outside the constraints of academia. As Annika explained, the skills you learn as a late-blooming researcher are transferrable, are relevant to all parts of your life, become part of you and how you look at things. Late-Blooming Researchers are flourishing, and long may we continue to do so.

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PART 2

JOURNEYS TO INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP

THE Ph.D. AS A PATH TO INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Ruth Adler (AUSTRALIA)

I am one of only two people I know to have done more than one PhD, although I am sure there must be a few of us around. As my contribution to the NCIS Guide for Independent Scholars, I would like to share my reflections on the PhD process, in which I ask why you should do a PhD, and tackle issues such as choosing a topic, the nuts and bolts of organizing your time, conducting your research and actually completing your thesis.

WHY DO A PHD?

Based on my experience, the best reason to do a PhD is because you are interested in a particular subject area or topic. If you don't have that, it is unlikely that you will sustain the interest or momentum to finish and you will likely end up hating the PhD program and your thesis.

For many scholars, a PhD program also provides a path to, and a framework for, independent research. While a PhD is undertaken within the context of the university system, it provides a structure and framework that enable research and it equips you with the skills necessary to undertake Independent Scholarship.

In addition, a PhD is good preparation for many careers. This is because while completing a PhD you develop research, analytical and written and oral communication skills. You also become accustomed to robust feedback and learn adaptability, flexibility and resilience, all of which are essential skills in any workplace. While the discipline or topic of your PhD may have little relevance to your career outside of academia, the skills you acquire while completing a PhD are invaluable.

While many who do a PhD follow an academic path, others abandon academia and pursue other options. In my case, I enrolled in my first PhD in Latin American history and politics in the 1980s with the idea that I would pursue an academic career. However, at the time, there were limited opportunities in my field in Australia and it was difficult to secure a post-doctoral research fellowship or a tenure-track position abroad from Australia. Instead, I joined the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) as a graduate trainee in 1990 and became a career diplomat.

When I commenced my second PhD in 2019, I had had a career in government and, in my fifties, was not looking for a new career. I had left government and was considering returning to research. I was interested in international climate law because during my time with DFAT one of my roles was as Assistant Secretary of the department's Environment Branch, responsible for climate and environmental issues. I had found it one of the more interesting and challenging assignments in my public service career, and wanted to have a deeper understanding of the climate issue and had the modest ambition that I might – one day – publish my thesis either as a book or a series of articles. I was also inspired by former Irish President Mary McAleese who, after leaving the presidency, undertook a doctorate in canon law.

However, I had no idea where to begin. I decided to enrol in the Master of International Law program at the Australian National University (ANU) and take some units in international law and international climate and environment law. After several units of the Master's degree, I was tired of the coursework and the cycle of essays and exams, and started to think about doing research and a PhD. I saw the PhD as an opportunity to receive guidance and support for my research; it was also a way of acquiring the investigative, analytical and writing skills necessary for independent research.

ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS IN LIFE

The purpose of a PhD is generally understood to be an original contribution to knowledge and, without a doubt, it is probably one of the hardest things in life you can ever do. It requires commitment, dedication and focus. It is often a solitary undertaking with limited opportunities for engagement and interaction with other researchers. While your family and friends will likely share your initial enthusiasm for your PhD, their eyes will quickly glaze over when you regale them with the details of your topic, your research questions, your methodology, your theoretical framework, the debates in the academic literature and your preliminary findings.

Your supervisors will be interested in you and your topic, but you are only one of many concerns they will have in their academic and personal lives. If you have good supervisors, they will respond to emails, provide timely feedback on your research plan and your draft chapters, and be honest and constructive in their comments. They will expect you to be self-motivated and not overly dependent on them for advice and guidance.

There will be days when you will hate the thesis and wonder what possessed you to begin it in the first place. Days when you procrastinate and do everything possible to avoid reading and writing. Days when non-essential chores and errands will eat away your time. Days when you will browse social media and succumb to the endless possibilities of online shopping.

There will also be days when you will read blogs about other people's struggles with their PhDs and screeds of advice about overcoming writer's block and other challenges. A few that come to mind include *The Thesis Whisperer* by Professor Mewburn of the Australian National University, the podcasts of Professor Tara Brabazon of Flinders University and the *PhD Owls – Older, Wiser Learners* Facebook group. These sites provide helpful advice and resources on doing a PhD and feeling part of a larger community. However, useful as they are, they won't solve *your particular problem* of having to sit down and write *your* thesis.

I thought that, having done one PhD, the second one would be easier. But that was not the case. I experienced the same challenges and self-doubt that plagued me in my twenties when I undertook my first one. In both cases, I had excellent supervisors, a manageable topic and a motivation to finish. However, in both cases, the writing was a challenge. Then, of course, there is no automatic guarantee that it will pass and/or that it will have the qualities that will make it worthy of eventual publication.

FUNDING A PHD

A major challenge in undertaking a PhD is funding the costs. While most universities (in Australia at least) will waive the tuition fee for candidates accepted into their PhD programs, there are the costs associated with day-to-day living, purchasing any necessary programs or materials for your research, and any field work. In the case of both my PhDs, I had the good fortune to be awarded a scholarship.

During my first PhD my scholarship provided a modest living allowance (approximately AUD 6,000 per annum in the 1980s) and access to funding for an extended period of fieldwork to undertake historical research in the United States and Mexico. With no independent resources or funding of my own, I could not have undertaken the PhD without the scholarship. I supplemented my scholarship income with casual work as a research assistant and editing academic papers.

When I began my second PhD, I didn't expect to be offered a scholarship. I thought the university would prefer younger candidates with the prospect of an academic career ahead of them. I felt that my age (58) would militate against me and that I would experience ageism. But that was not the case and I received the full support of my supervisors in both my application for the PhD program and a scholarship. Along with the scholarship came funding for a new computer and a post-graduate research allowance. So far as my second PhD was concerned, the scholarship was a 'dealmaker' and gave me the confidence to proceed. If you are older and considering a PhD, do not be deterred by your age – you might be pleasantly surprised to discover that you are offered a fully-funded candidature and a living allowance.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

Choosing a PhD topic is not easy. You may commence with a general idea of a topic or research area, but then it needs to be narrowed down to something manageable that has not been done to death. The problem is that most people embarking upon a PhD project don't know what has already been done when they start. It is only through painstaking research and a review of the existing academic literature that the gaps in the scholarship begin to appear.

In the case of both my PhD projects, my choice of topic was serendipitous. In my first PhD, I had an interest in Latin America. I gravitated to Mexico because my supervisors were 'Mexicanists' who could supervise a project related to Mexican history and politics. I wanted to work on a relatively contemporary topic and began with the idea that I would study the impact of the 1930s depression on Mexico. I spent many days in the university library, reviewing the card catalogue and the major academic journals in Latin American studies in a quest for literature relevant to the 1930s in Mexico. Almost a year later, I was no closer to having a defined topic, but I had read more that year than any other year before or after.

Towards the end of 1984, one of my supervisors said to me, 'Well, we really should be finding you a topic by now' and then asked whether I had thought about researching labour history and the nationalisations of the oil industry and the railways by Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938. 'There has not been much done on that', he said. Of course, I had not considered that a possible topic; it was about the most obscure topic I could imagine! However, being eager to please and to meet my supervisor's approval, I immediately agreed it would be a good option. We then had a general discussion about possible resources for the topic, but didn't focus on the research questions or the methodology. There was, of course, the idea that it would be a contribution to modern Mexican historiography… although I had no real idea of where my particular contribution might lie.

When I commenced my second PhD in 2019, I had a vague idea that I would like to work on a topic related to climate justice and the 2015 *Paris Agreement*,[1] but again, I had no clear idea of what the focus of my research should be. Over many months, I read about the evolution of the global climate regime and international climate law. Eventually, I settled on the general area of climate finance – a critical

[1] *Paris Agreement*, opened for signature 12 December 2015 (entered into force 4 November 2016) (*'Paris Agreement'*).

element of the success of international efforts to combat climate change. After further research and reading, and several discussions with my supervisors, I narrowed the topic to a study of the legitimacy of the Green Climate Fund, the world's largest dedicated climate fund.

FINDING SUPERVISORS

Finding the right supervisors is critical to the success of any PhD project. While they don't need to be experts in your particular topic, the supervisors do need to have expertise in the general subject area of your thesis. They need to be able to provide guidance on the choice of topic, the resources for your research, the research questions and method, and the theoretical framework. They also need to have to have the personal capacity and availability to provide supervision.

With both of my PhDs, I was fortunate with my supervisors. In the case of my first PhD, only two universities in Australia at the time offered programs in Latin American Studies. Having completed my undergraduate degree in the School of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of New South Wales, I decided to undertake my post-graduate program at La Trobe University's Institute of Latin American Studies. It was a small field in Australia at the time, with a great sense of camaraderie among the academics involved, and my Melbourne-based supervisors warmly welcomed me. La Trobe was a relatively new university at the time. It was seeking to establish a reputation as an institution different from the so-called 'sandstone' universities and offered programs that were not available elsewhere. The Department of History, where I was based, was going through a halcyon period and there were several scholars of international renown, including Pulitzer Prize winner Rhys Isaac. There were resources available to fund research, some of which trickled down to PhD students, and a sense of intellectual freedom. My supervisors encouraged me to think broadly about my topic and where the PhD might take me.

With my second PhD, I reconnected with a former colleague who had left government to undertake a PhD and pursue an academic career, and who was based at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). Through the ANU, I had heard that there was excellent work being undertaken on international climate and environmental issues by researchers in the Faculty of Law at UTAS. So, I reached out to my former colleague. I had also seen on the Faculty of Law website that there was an available PhD research project on the effectiveness of the *Paris Agreement* as a mechanism for climate justice. Over several months, my colleague and I discussed potential PhD topics. He identified a colleague willing to be my second supervisor and then I submitted an expression of interest in enrolling in a PhD program.

Throughout my candidature, my supervisors provided excellent support, encouragement and academic guidance, as well as advice on international climate and environment law, international relations theory, academic writing and research methodology. Their professionalism was unrivalled and they consistently provided timely, practical and valuable feedback on all aspects of the research, drafting and revision of the thesis. It was a relationship based on mutual respect and we got along well.

Having found good supervisors willing to take you on as a PhD candidate, keeping the relationship on track and proactively managing it is essential. Critical elements in ensuring a good relationship with your supervisors include maintaining regular communication, keeping meeting appointments and preparing for meetings, advising them of any issues related to your research or any personal problems that may impede your progress, and giving them plenty of time to review drafts. As a rule of thumb, I would try to send my supervisors drafts of chapters or other material at least a week before our monthly meetings.

You also need to be flexible and adaptable in your approach, open to their suggestions and ideas about your topic, and be prepared to accept what might, at times, come across as robust feedback. Listen carefully to what they say (I would always try to write notes on our discussions immediately after our supervisory meetings) and try to incorporate their suggestions and feedback. Trust the process and their professionalism. At the end of the day, they are likely to be better placed than you to know the required standard in terms of PhD-level scholarship and what is likely to be passed by examiners.

UNDERTAKING RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK

One of the joys of my first PhD was the opportunity to do fieldwork. My supervisors had agreed that I should undertake fieldwork in the US and Mexico, and I was given some funds to cover the costs of my travel and a few incidental expenses. Unlike the strict and, at times, bureaucratic requirements of universities at present, in the 1980s no formal application for permission to travel from the university nor ethics approval were required – you made your own arrangements to travel and were essentially responsible for yourself. My academic transcript records that the Higher Degree Committee approved a period of overseas research.

In March 1985, I left Australia for a year of fieldwork. Contact with my supervisors was intermittent, via an occasional letter updating them on my progress. I started in Washington DC and spent several months in the National Archives Washington (NAW) and the Library of Congress, scouring for information on 1930s Mexico and my particular topic. I still didn't have 'research questions' and my 'research method' evolved as I went along. My days at the NAW were spent sifting through files from Record Group 84: Records of the US Embassy in Mexico. Each morning, I would be greeted by the security guards and the archival staff who would wheel out trolleys of green boxed files. I would settle in for the day and conscientiously take hand-written notes of anything broadly relevant to my topic. For the guards, I was something of a novelty, being Australian and aged 24, and they would unashamedly flirt with me, asking me if I had a boyfriend, if I would go out with them and what I was doing in Washington. Everyone else in the archive was at least double my age and most were women researching their family history. There was also the occasional academic who – oblivious to my penurious situation as a student on a meagre Australian post-graduate stipend – would complain about the cost of living in Washington.

Some days I would spend at the Library of Congress, sifting through the papers of Josephus Daniels (who served as the US Ambassador to Mexico from 1933 to 1942), rare books and other manuscripts, and microfiche of newspapers from the time. I was mesmerised by the Library's Reading Room, with its ornate dome and sense of history. Such was the stillness and quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

My primary contact with Australia was with my parents, whom I would call on a reverse charge basis now and again when I felt the occasional bout of homesickness. 'This is the United States. I have a collect call from "a Ruth Adler". Do you accept the charges?' the operator would say. There would then be a pause at the other end and my father would say, in his best telephone voice, 'Yes, I accept the charges'.

I had planned my stay in Washington carefully and, on arrival, paid for a semester of accommodation at the International Student House on R Street NW near Dupont Circle. However, after I had paid all my costs, I had very little money left; in fact, just enough to buy a cream cheese bagel at a bakery on Capitol Hill for lunch on the days I was at the Library of Congress and to pay for some photocopying of materials relevant to my research. At ten cents a page, the photocopying was very expensive for someone on my budget of less than one hundred US dollars per week, and I had to be selective about what to reproduce.

One day, I met the head of the Hispanic Division at the Library of Congress and aware of my situation, she took pity on me and rang her contacts at various universities in DC. Within minutes, I was offered a part-time job as a research associate at the Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance at

Georgetown University. My task was to research historical migration from the Caribbean to the US. I felt fortunate to be offered such a job, and it sustained me for my remaining time in Washington, DC.

In September 1985, I went to Mexico. Within weeks of arriving, I was caught up in the devastating earthquakes that hit Mexico City on 19 and 20 September 1985 and resulted in hundreds of buildings collapsing and the deaths of many thousands of people. For several days, I was stranded in the two-star hotel where I was temporarily staying while I looked for permanent accommodation. There was no water or electricity in our neighbourhood (as guests at the hotel, we survived with candles and bottled water, and shared food) and for a number of days it was impossible to communicate with the outside world. Undeterred by the magnitude of the disaster, I decided to wait until things settled, which they eventually did after several weeks.

In Mexico, I was left very much to my own devices as my research project slowly took shape. The idea was that I would find as much as I could on events fifty years previously, about which not much was known, and that when I had enough material I would come home and write up the PhD. Not surprisingly, my research took much longer than expected because I over-researched my topic and didn't know when to stop. After all, there are always more archival records, newspapers and manuscripts that you can find that might be relevant to your research. Needless to say, because I did too much research and didn't have a clear idea of the boundaries of my topic, I found it very hard to write the thesis and simply didn't know where to begin…or end….

Highlights of my fieldwork included the interviews I did for my research. My interviewees were trade union leaders and rank-and-file workers who, in the 1980s, were already in their eighties. It was my first foray into oral history. My approach was simple: I asked them to tell me about their lives. Their eyes would light up as they relived their younger lives and told me about how all the foreigners in the Mexican oil industry left at midnight on 18 March 1938 and how each worker slipped into the role of his (there were no women oil workers in those days) immediate supervisor all the way to the top of the British and North American oil companies which ran Mexico's petroleum industry from the late nineteenth century until that historic night. They found it incredible that *una muchaha* (a young girl), all the way from *el país de los canguros* (the country of kangaroos), had come to Mexico to record their stories! Almost 40 years later, I still have the interviews recorded on cassette tapes and kept in a shoe box.

In the shoe box, there is also a newspaper clipping from Mexico's left-wing daily, *La Jornada*, dated 26 November 1999. It is something I came across during my posting to Mexico as an Australian diplomat between 1998 and 2000, and records the fact that one of my interviewees, Valentín Campa, had died the day before at the age of 95. Campa, a prominent Mexican Communist, is described as one of the most important social fighters of the century. I re-read the piece recently with a tinge of sadness, as it served as a reminder of the transience of life and a bygone era. I am glad, however, that I had the opportunity to meet these extraordinary gentlemen from a different generation who had all the time in the world to share their stories with the young woman from the country of kangaroos.

The research for my second PhD was undertaken remotely in a far less exciting setting on a computer in my study at home during the COVID pandemic. While the pandemic prevented regular trips to Tasmania to meet with my supervisors in person, I found that with the online availability of most of the primary and secondary material necessary for my PhD and with the advice and assistance of the university librarians, I was able to undertake the research needed for my thesis.

I advise anyone contemplating a PhD or a major independent research project to engage early and often with a research librarian through a university library or a major public library, such as the National Library of Australia or the US Library of Congress. In addition, a number of online research databases, such as JSTOR, have some freely available resources. Google Scholar also often has freely available versions of journal articles and monographs. Bibliographical programs such as Endnote, Mendeley and Zotero, can also assist with formatting footnotes or endnotes, compiling the bibliography and organising academic literature and research materials.

WRITING-UP AND COMPLETING THE PHD

There is no way around it. Writing is hard and writing-up a PhD is a challenging and time-consuming task. There will also be days when, no matter how hard you try, your brain will be awash with thoughts and ideas, but you cannot think clearly about your topic, express yourself or get a single word onto the page. There will be days when you write a few paragraphs and then delete them because you are unhappy with what you have written.

When I did my first PhD, the general approach was to read as widely as possible, formulate a research topic, undertake research and any fieldwork, and then write it all up. The expectation was that the PhD would take around four years, although many people would take much longer because they had over-researched their topic and didn't know where to begin in terms of writing-up. It was easy to get an extension of time and no one was too worried about how long the PhD would take.

In my case, I fell in love with Mexico and didn't want to come home, and I was always finding new material for my project, which gave me a good reason to stay and continue my research. It got to the point when, one day, one of my supervisors rang me to ask what I was doing and to say that the Higher Degree Committee had been asking questions about why I needed to be in Mexico for such a long period! The true answer to that question was that I loved Mexico and had no idea what I would do when I had to return to Australia. I had also been given opportunities to present papers at Mexican and US conferences and to publish articles – opportunities that would not have come my way had I not been there.

It broke my heart to leave Mexico and I cried all the way on the long-haul flight from Los Angeles to Sydney on my way home. Once home, battling homesickness for Mexico and reverse culture shock, I faced the seemingly insurmountable task of writing the thesis. It was hard. But, somehow, I managed to do it, bit by bit, section by section, and then finally, chapter by chapter.

I had an image in my mind of a little boat crossing the Pacific Ocean. I was in the little boat, being buffeted around. I knew that if I kept on going, I would eventually cross that seemingly endless ocean of 'writing-up the PhD'. And I was right. On 1 April 1992, I was in Manila on my first posting as an Australian diplomat. I received a telegram from the Western Philippines Telegraph Company, which simply read, 'Congratulations, Dr Adler'. I initially thought it was an April Fools' Day joke!

With my second PhD, the doctoral program was more tightly structured. There was preliminary coursework on research methodology, a confirmation of candidature process at the end of the first year and an annual review thereafter. All of the advice from my supervisors – and indeed from everyone – was to start writing regularly as soon as possible. I tried to follow such sensible advice and started writing parts of the thesis early on. I worked steadily, stopping when I needed a break or a rest or when work or other commitments intervened. At the end, I engaged an editor who helped me with much of the grunt work associated with preparing the thesis for submission, including proofreading, ensuring consistency in the format of footnotes and compiling the bibliography. These days, many universities will allow you to engage an academic editor to assist with these very tedious and time-consuming tasks. Some (including my university) will contribute to some or all of the cost of this.

With two days to spare, I finished the thesis within the four years allowed for my candidature. I also realised that the perfect can be the enemy of the good and that there is a time to stop and finish; as they say, a good PhD is a finished PhD.

NO REGRETS

As I wrote this piece, I was awaiting the examiners' reports for my recently completed thesis. It was a strange feeling to finish and I felt neither elation nor relief upon submission – maybe it was because I had been through it all before, in much the same way that having a baby can be much easier the second time. It just felt like the job was done and that it was time to move on. I have no regrets about doing two PhDs, but – in my seventh decade – I won't be signing up for another one…or at least not any time soon.

FINDING FREEDOM OUTSIDE ACADEMIA

Jane S. Gabin (USA)

When I was 40, I realized that I would never make a living in the academic community where I had landed. I had made a choice in my private life that assured this. I had two small children and a partner with tenure. This made me a faculty spouse, a species prone to exploitation in the university community (female spouses often had careers, but at a lower level and/or compensated at a lower rate). I was certainly not the type who said of part-time teaching, "I love it so much I would do it for free!" I spent a few years doing various things – being part of a speakers' series at public libraries across the state where I lived, running a small shop (imports from the UK), and sporadic lecturing stints at the university (where I knew I would never be hired full-time) but I was constantly dissatisfied.

It was not exactly clear what my course of action would be. So I looked at what interested me most. Where I found the most pleasure. At that time I had unimaginable decades lying before me, and I simply decided to move blindly ahead. Now, with the benefit of the years, I can see things in a pattern, and realize that being outside the academy, not *having* to publish on a schedule and not *having* to teach what other people wanted, gave me incredible freedom.

Attending conferences in my field, which was – at the time – 19th-century American literature was impossible, as I had to pay my own way, but a full-time job would allow me to afford it. My status as an Independent Scholar – which I was then but had no group with which to align – allowed me to pursue personal interests. I wanted to travel, particularly to England, and I wanted to wander in bookshops, I didn't want things, but experiences.

I was originally drawn to the subject of American literary expatriatism *because* I was outside the academy. My original search took place just before the internet and e-mail – so my research involved long hours in the library and waiting for airmail letters from the U.K. I was looking for American women who had sought career fulfillment in England, from about 1865 (the beginning of the "Gilded Age") to the Great War.

Although I had given myself six months to find a few figures, I found a long list. There were diarists, actors, journalists, and musicians. One source led me to another, and when I encountered Elizabeth Banks, born in New Jersey in 1865, who paid her own way to London in the 1890s, I had found the personification of my subject. Since that time, I have collected her writings, corresponded with her cousin (who discovered *me*), and written about her.

But I had few academic mentors.[1] And, with a PhD that was over a decade old, it was really too late for me to do anything substantial. I was in the college town where I had studied and at this point felt written off by the University, which, I imagined, thought once I was married I was no longer their concern. This changed in the early 1990s when, following a summer school faculty stint at my alma mater in New York, I found myself trying again to teach, and had a couple of great "aha!" moments in my classes that reawakened my interest in working with a group of students.

There was a temporary position at a women's college about 25 miles away, and here I found the mentorship I had missed. I was encouraged to rejoin the organizations whose memberships I had allowed to lapse, feeling the *ennui* of a drifting ex-academic. With their blessing and backing, I started going to conferences again, and successfully submitted papers for presentation. During that year, I faced another decision because the post I occupied at the women's college would not be continued: stay on this path, or take a position that offered a tangential position at the University – the place where this paper begins. I decided to take the job. I was 40 and knew I did not want to rely on my husband's salary and benefits for personal research. If I took this job, I would be only steps from the University library. And – I thought, but incorrectly – I could use my work for the University as a springboard for applying for more academic positions.

So, in 1994, I began work in the undergraduate admissions office. This gave me some status within my university community, as well as steady income and access to a university library system, which was necessary so I could persevere with my academic project: a book-length study of American women writers who had chosen to pursue their craft in England, from about 1870 to the end of World War I. The second day of my new job, I was offered the "opportunity" of being in charge of applications from other countries because of my "international" experience – that is, running an English-imports shop. I became an expert at reading transcripts of all kinds, interpreting TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, and writing acceptance letters tailored to the culture of the applicants, and I became fluent in the language of student visas.

At the time I started working, I had an idealized conception of the University: as a place where knowledge could be pursued and dreams fulfilled. One of my assigned duties, for which I was hired, was to produce the "viewbook," a printed brochure designed to tell those interested in applying about the mission of the University and the special programs it offered. It was very literary. And this was negatively seen, though, by some colleagues who complained that there were too many words compared with pictures. However, the faculty liked it.

I also expressed my idealism in my presentations with campus visitors. I re-connected with faculty mentors, and had several: two women in the English department, one woman in Comparative Literature, and one in Romance Languages. I was happy to take advantage of many benefits that were available on campus: lectures at the library, presentations in the alumni center, lunches with colleagues, women faculty members. I even taught in the Department of English, although it came back to me that this ruffled some feathers in the admissions office, even though I never took any additional time for this. And I was selected to participate in a program designed to prepare women for taking on more leadership roles, at the University primarily, or elsewhere.

Keeping up my research, and writing late into the night after my children were asleep, I had Elizabeth Banks's 1928 autobiography (she wrote a total of three) *The Remaking of an American* reissued by the University Press of Florida. I also wrote a 50-page introduction. No one at my school made a fuss. I was well aware that any accomplishment would be seen as trifling by the academics and as pretentious by those in my office. My only champions were those women faculty members on campus who understood what I had done. Several years after this, I was spending a week during the summer in London, and was doing some work in the British Library, when I met by chance the daughter of one of them!

That was probably that same year, 1997, in which I gave a paper on these same American expatriates at a conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. The building where we presented our papers had an atrium, where booksellers had set up their displays. I was browsing through them and suddenly realized there were only a few minutes remaining in the break before I was scheduled to speak. I randomly reached out to one volume on a shelf full of 19th-century bound volumes. This was totally without imagining that what I had touched would be the *one* volume I sought, an 1893 edition of a magazine called *The Young Woman*, containing the only interview Elizabeth Banks gave in her lifetime! But the bookseller had stepped away. Inside the front cover was the price: £20. I checked my wallet and saw that I had exactly one £20 note remaining. I left this with a message for the bookseller and dashed off to give my paper. This is an example of the serendipitous nature of things that has pursued me over the years.

Since I was in charge of international applications, every request and every visitor from other countries was directed to me. One time a Russian-speaking woman came and inquired about American education for her son. I could not speak any Russian except a greeting and how to say "I don't understand," because that is what my mother used to repeat to my grandmother. But this woman's English was fluent. It turned out that the city she came from, Chișinău, was the <u>same</u> one from which my grandparents had emigrated, when it was called Kishinev. What were the chances? She returned the next day with a set of postcards of buildings my grandparents would have known. This was the sort of thing that happened to me over and over, the interweaving of different threads of my past – and future – life.

I remained in charge of all international undergraduate applications for the entire 10 years I worked for the admissions office. I assessed what was truly important in each application, and tried to balance the ones I admitted – attempting to select students from around the world and who wanted to study a variety of subjects. And I was given free rein to do this, not because it was at all important to the University, but because no one else wanted to do the work! I took my role quite seriously, as I felt our entire state would be judged by each country for the way its citizens were treated. But I was bothered by the offhand way international students were, in general, treated by my office. Once I went to a Dean to express my dissatisfaction. "Aren't you appalled," I asked him, "by the fact that this University allows <u>one person</u> to make these decisions?" He responded, "Ordinarily I would be, but since that one person is you, it's fine." I was encouraged by his supportive attitude.

But in the ten years that I worked in the admissions office, I must have applied for twenty or more openings elsewhere in the University. I had interviews, but someone else was always selected. I went to someone at the University and asked for my credentials to be reviewed. I had an odd picture, I was told: someone with better credentials than most, but a comparatively old PhD. I would never advance at the University.

At the same time, the recruitment trips that I made to New York City renewed my relationships with people there. And I continued my research into expatriate writers, at the same time mining my research for conference submissions. This, plus some campus visitors' telling me that I explained the academic mission of a university so well that I ought to take this to high school students in general, made me seriously consider my next step. My children were now young adults. I wanted to leave my town and the University and see what I could accomplish if I sought positions elsewhere.

I applied for a position in college counseling at a prestigious school in New York City. It turned out that my PhD was a deciding factor. I was given the job, but the school was not the right match for me. At the end of the year, however, I had another school to go to.

Remember that research I began in the University library? It took me 20 years to finish all the research and writing of my book, but I finally had a volume of which I was incredibly proud, and it was published in 2006 by the University Press of Florida. This was *American Women in Gilded-Age London* (I did *not* make up this title! I know the "Gilded Age" referred to the USA, not England). Along the way I recycled some of my research into chapters that would stand alone (a lesson I had learned from faculty mentors), and used them to apply to other conferences and to give lectures around New York. After the book was published, I took myself on a lecture trip to England. All of this – the research *and* the travels – was at my own expense.

But I cannot put a price tag on the value of going into a little shop, specializing in theatre portraits, located in Cecil Court, just off the Strand in London, and asking for a picture of Mary Anderson (1865-

1943). The proprietor exclaimed, "Mary Anderson! Someone still knows Mary Anderson!" Or a valuation of sitting in Mary Anderson de Navarro's Cotswold home, where Sir Edward Elgar, James Barrie, and John Singer Sargent had also visited, and signing the same guest register? Or the summer evening in London, when I followed the setting sun as it illuminated the rooftops and then fixed on one house in particular: I found myself outside the "Studio House," the only known address of Julie Helen Heyneman, an artist from California I had featured.

I applied a lesson I had learned from colleagues in academia, and tried to market the book myself by arranging for talks at various places in the UK. I gave lectures at The Women's Library at London Metropolitan University, The Bishopsgate Institute in London, and at the United Reform Church in Broadway, Worcestershire, where Mary Anderson de Navarro had lived. I also kept my eyes open for other lecturing possibilities in England.

Back in New York, I adjusted well to my life as a college counselor. I loved this more than admissions work because it gave me a chance to get to know a student and the family thoroughly when suggesting schools. In addition, I had many chances to see college campuses, small and large, in various regions. One thing led to another. A stint answering questions about various aspects of the admissions process turned into 10 years' work, writing a monthly "Ask the College Counselor" for the website of *InsideSchools*. At two different conferences, I gave presentations on writing about literature, which I hoped the school counselors would use to involve the English teachers in their students' college processes. Also, I had great summer gigs for a company that ran educational programs for high school students, and led workshops at Columbia University and the University of California at Berkeley (in the interest of transparency, I need to stress that these were not Columbia or Berkeley programs, but in rented space on each campus). Still, the money I earned allowed me to travel to California, Russia, and England, where I <u>did</u> visit a village composed entirely of bookshops!

And then in 2012, I made a rather momentous discovery among my late father's papers. I had always known he had served with the US Army in recently liberated Paris. But I found a picture of him with a French civilian family that included a young boy. There was only one surname, in my father's handwriting, on the back of this photo. As luck would have it, the current Paris telephone book was online, and I found about 40 entries under this name.

After making 40 copies of the photo, I sent one to each of the people named with a note in French, written with another teacher's help, saying that I was the daughter of the soldier and inquired if the individuals portrayed were familiar, since they had the same surname. I did not mention my father's first name or rank (his stripes were not visible). Although most people did not respond, a few did with messages like "I took this picture to a family gathering but no one recognized anyone" or "my grandmother looked at the photo, but didn't recognize anyone."

And then I received a phone call one day around at 5 a.m.: "Sergeant Al! I never forget!" I cannot relate this story without becoming emotional. My spine tingled. I did not know, originally, if the picture resulted from a one-time accidental meeting with these people, or the culmination of a much longer relationship. I soon learned that my father, who had *looked* for these people as the result of the prodding of a relative in America, was "like a member of the family."

This was the beginning of my friendship with Georges, the grown-up boy in the photo. He had a past full of trauma, beginning with the loss of his father during the Occupation of Paris, and I vowed to remain his friend for the rest of his life. And it was the beginning of my obsession with Paris. I learned some rudimentary French so we could communicate. I visited all the places he spoke about. I started to do research in French history (for instance, how much did the liberating American soldiers know about French collaboration during the war?) For eight years I visited Paris annually to see Georges. Could I have done this on an academic schedule?

Maybe, maybe not.

Eventually, I did enough research to submit a proposal, which was accepted, for the 2014 meeting of the European Association of Jewish Studies, and presented a paper at the École Normale Supérieure on the rue d'Ulm in Paris. I was at a disadvantage because my French was rudimentary, but I met a number of fascinating people and saw the city from another viewpoint. At this point, I did not think of writing my father's adventures as a novel, but there were entire sections of his story that were absolutely unknown to me, and since he was no longer on this earth, I would never know. And that is when I decided to turn my story into fiction.

A number of years ago, I was giving a talk at an admissions conference in upstate New York. I took my own advice to high schoolers and looked for a copy of the student newspaper. I was interested to read an article protesting the 2% raise given to the college's teachers. The article's authors said this ought to include the college's adjunct instructors as well, because, the article went on, they teach 40% of the classes. I was astounded. 30% is the norm at large universities but 40% struck me as excessive. And this was a private undergraduate-only institution. When I got home looked it up. The students were incorrect: adjuncts taught 46% of the courses at this school.

I did not want to recommend this school any more; but my department wouldn't have that. They wanted to show that our students could be admitted to lots of schools. Everyone has a boss. And people have to like your work. So at this high school, as at others, the students and parents had to be satisfied with their colleges. When I worked in the admissions office, I had to satisfy my director. I couldn't express many things I considered. I had to bide my time, but meanwhile looked into the situation of adjuncts at different colleges and universities.

After I officially "retired" from my college counseling position, I returned to North Carolina, continuing my college counseling on a freelance basis. In addition, I gave papers on various aspects of the expatriate women I had studied at the International Conference on Victorian Women Writers held in England at Canterbury Christ Church University; this conference actually took place over three summers – 2016, 2017, 2018 – and I gave a paper each year. This continuity not only gave me a familiarity with Canterbury, but was extremely collegial, having attracted people who were all interested in the same Victorian period.

One of the friends I made was another American woman, who had worked at a large university in the Midwest. She had been hired full-time on an annual, but renewable, basis; they kept renewing her until the year we met, when they didn't. This woman was then in her mid-50s, with a PhD more than ten years old, and no Plan B. She had been given little notice, and could find only adjunct work at other schools.

When I returned to the States I began to do elaborate research into the use – and abuse – of part-time teachers in academia. My friend's situation was typical of the vast majority of the adjuncts I read about. At many schools, I found a huge disparity between full-time faculty and an even larger number engaged in part-time gigs. I continued until I had reviewed the faculty statistics at almost 900 US colleges and universities. I tried calling attention to what I saw as a pervasive, and increasing, problem in American higher education. Now I am still vitally interested in expatriate women writers – but this is on a back burner for the time being. Currently I want to focus on the admissions industry. Because it is an industry, with all the concomitant subgenres of test prep companies, tutoring services, private counseling groups, experts in the essay, interview preparation, and other special interests.

However, the national organization representing high school guidance counselors and national organizations representing colleges and universities themselves do not wish to publicize the fact that higher education in this country is anything but equitable. I can say this because I have the freedom of no longer having a boss – neither a university chancellor nor a head of school.

My being an advocate for the substantial and ever-growing population of adjunct faculty is naturally linked to my own status as a former member of this disenfranchised group. And this activity has also put me in touch with individuals I might not have encountered had my life developed otherwise. I now serve on the communications committee of Higher Education Labor United and hope to use my writing skills for the improvement of working conditions for those who do the majority of teaching in high education. This is where my own place as an Independent Scholar comes in: no one is paying me a salary, and I am not beholden to any special interest groups. I can say what I like, as long as it is true and does not violate high ethical standards.

Perhaps I could be angry because my life would have been substantially different had I become a college professor. There is no way to know. I cannot help going over and over the incompleteness of my preparation for the realities of the job market. I realized, much too late, that I needed to have at least one influential mentor backing me, and how I missed the boat entirely by choosing an advisor who was already retired from one university and was headed towards his second retirement. On the other hand, he encouraged my work and made writing the dissertation – over which I saw other students really struggling – a great pleasure.

My career trajectory has taken me further and further away from my original research interests in 19th-century American literature to another, and admissions work led me into college counseling work in New York. Although "retirement" brought me back to North Carolina, I put this within quotation marks because I don't believe that thinking people really ever retire. These side trips have enriched my overall journey, and I hope to write more about Elizabeth Banks and other "New Women" of American and British literature.

About being an Independent Scholar: I was one already 40 years ago, ages before I joined the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. Any scholarly work done outside the academy is Independent Scholarship. And when I think about myself, I often picture myself alone. I enjoy people and socializing; but I also value privacy and solitude. There is very likely a connection with my being an only child. I remember going to Scout camp as a girl, and enjoying rest hour when I would be left alone with my letters and books. As a teen, I liked taking a break from busy-ness to be alone at times. As my mother used to say "I am alone but never lonely." And I have gotten into the habit of planning many trips by myself, with accommodations and meals. I have lost count of the number of times I have done this – but I have also enjoyed preparing for trips with family, to see friends, to go to the theatre. I'm not an asocial hermit.

Although a fairly new member of the NCIS, I hope to take more advantage of its programs in the future. I do like having a group to call my own, to grant me an identity in this organization-conscious world. And I like being associated with people who share the same goals and vision: that a campus is not a necessity for scholarship.

FINDING A HOME IN INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Kathryn Burrows (USA)

Two letters sent right before I graduated with my PhD in 2021:

> *Dear Dr X* (my doctoral dissertation advisor):
> *[...] I have decided I don't want to go tenure track. It's too much for me at this time in my life. Do you know anything about independent scholarship? Is that even possible? Can I use my PhD "on my own?" Can I research and publish independently? [...]*
> *Thanks,*
> *Kate*
>
> *Dear Kate,*
> *[...] I have never heard of anyone publishing independently! My first thought though, is that it would be too hard. You need the support of your colleagues, access to libraries, and the schedule that an academic life provides. Writing is so hard to do on your own, you really need an institution to support you. I know I could never do scholarship on my own, and I strongly encourage you to reconsider your decision to not go tenure-track. You are truly gifted, and I would hate to lose you to "independent scholarship." [...]*
> *Warmly,*
> *Dr. X*

And from Y, an informal sociology advisor from my workplace, in response to the same letter sent to Dr. X:

> *Dear Kate,*
> *[...] You definitely cannot do sociology independently! Sociology is a "team sport," and you need the support of colleagues to do this work well. I know I personally get a lot from my mentors here at XYZ [healthcare institution] as well as at ABC University. I get ideas from my colleagues, and support in finishing big projects. I can't imagine doing this work independently. [...]*
> *Warmly,*
> *Y*

These two letters were disheartening for me. I had not yet discovered a community of Independent Scholars; all I knew was that I didn't want to go tenure-track. I was 46 years old, and it had taken me 14 years to get my PhD. I was done with academic life, but I didn't want to abandon my PhD work. It meant too much to me. I was lost.

Since there are very few professional academic, full-time opportunities in my area, a tenure track job would likely have meant leaving my family, my husband's family, my friends, and my support system. We had already moved across the country once for me to attend graduate school, and it was a disaster, both personally and for our marriage. Our marriage suffered for moving, and I promised my husband I'd never move for my job again. I was stuck. Do I stay in my hometown without a tenure track job or get a divorce and move across the country to Who Knows Where to take a low paying and grueling job?

At the time of graduation, I was already working at Veterans Affairs in research, so stayed in my current job after graduating. I decided to start a small research consulting business using a major freelancing platform. Meanwhile, I continued teaching on an adjunct basis at a few different colleges and universities around the country. I never taught more than one class a semester, though, so teaching wasn't ever going to be a source of financial security or support. The VA paid well, but was not rewarding, so I started looking for a new job.

I got a job – a disaster – at a small marketing firm. They said they liked my academic credentials and wanted to infuse more science into marketing; I wanted to be the one to imbue that science into their model. Unfortunately, it was a bust. They didn't want science after all, they just wanted the satisfaction of saying they had a scientist on the staff. I couldn't align my science values with marketing values. I never got it. After 6 months, they fired me. That might have been the best thing that's ever happened to me professionally, because I realized that I am really not cut out for business, and it spurred me on to ramp up my consulting work and my teaching.

Since the day I started consulting full-time, I have never been happier with my work. Running my own business really suits me, although I am still learning the ropes in terms of how to set boundaries with my clients and not let them suck all my time away from me in such a way that I don't have the time or energy to devote to my scholarship. I miss the companionship of coworkers and a reliable, predictable paycheck, but consulting gives me the freedom to work on my own projects.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH INDEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP?

In the middle of all this hubbub with work, I started trying to get chapters of my dissertation published. I had no mentors, my PhD advisor was no help, and I was on my own. I realized that publishing takes a lot of work- it was taking up a lot of my time. So, I started googling Independent Scholarship. First, I found a local affiliate of NCIS, and I immediately joined. This was during COVID, so we had bi-monthly meetings remotely. I presented some of my work to this organization. I enjoyed presenting. I then stumbled upon NCIS and was pleased to see that I was accepted as a full member!

I continued publishing. I had my first acceptance of a dissertation chapter the year I graduated; my other two substantive chapters were published this year, and two other papers were published after that. I also took opportunities as I saw them come across list servs. One of these was to coauthor a sociology textbook aimed at students in my state. I authored two chapters in that textbook, and I have to say the results of our combined work are amazing.

As an Independent Scholar, I agree with my mentors when they said scholarship isn't a one-man sport. It must be done in community; after all, scholarship is about being part of an ongoing conversation, and you must have others with whom to have that conversation. I have found that having co-authors greatly enhances my Independent Scholarship, both by keeping me engaged in the community, and keeping me engaged in the work. Co-authoring publications makes you accountable to others and exposes you to new ideas and new approaches to doing things.

My first collaborative project outside of graduate school arose out of my consulting business. One of my clients wanted to publish a chapter of her dissertation, and I agreed to come on as a co-author and help shape up her chapter for publication. In this role, I was a guide and publication expert, and she was the subject matter expert. We rewrote the chapter together; I walked her through the publication process, and we got it published. She was thrilled and, with my help (but not as a co-author) she later published a second chapter from her dissertation on her own. This was the beginning of a beautiful long-term partnership. She and I recently completed another paper, this time collaborating from the beginning. I find that collaborating with her is great because she comes from a different academic discipline, so we are able to combine our expertise to come up with something that neither one of us would be able to do on our own.

Another partnership I value is with the chairman of the board of a nonprofit organization on which I am on the board. Like my first collaborator, she and I come from complementary but different academic backgrounds, and we often have competing views. Rather than this being a hindrance, this has proven beneficial for our writing relationship. For example, she and I are currently co-writing a debate piece in which she is arguing for a medical model of pediatric bipolar disorder, and I am arguing for a traditional sociological response to the problem. This is valuable because it will (hopefully!) be published in a medical journal, and while the debate has been healthy for both of us to expand our viewpoints on the topic, it also gets the sociological viewpoint out to a medical audience. This partnership was highlighted when we published a paper in *Bipolar Disorders*, the leading medical journal about bipolar disorders, and in the journal's podcast, the paper was billed as being a "mandatory must read." My sociological approach to bipolar disorder was new to this audience, and it was because I collaborated with someone with medical and psychological *bona fides* that I was able to reach this new audience. I am excited to continue to collaborate with her because it allows me to extend the sociological imagination to new people and new audiences who may not otherwise hear my message. She also encourages me to see a new viewpoint and expand my own views, which is valuable. In addition to the debate we are currently writing, we are also coauthoring a book chapter.

As part of my consulting business, I have been able to publish as well. For example, I have written a paper with an anesthesiologist about a new education program for medical interns. Consulting, as a part of my overall Independent Scholar identity, has given me the opportunity to collaborate with people outside my discipline, with whom I wouldn't normally have been able to collaborate. This has broadened both my publication base and my knowledge of different writing styles.

My newest venture is embarking on a solo authored book. I always thought of myself as an "article person"- I never thought I had a book in me. My ideas always seemed limited to 20 pages, and writing a book always felt daunting. But recently, an idea that has spawned one book chapter, and an upcoming article, has started to come into shape as a larger book project. I'm excited to join the ranks of Independent Scholars who write books and am eager to expand my skills as a researcher and writer as I embark on this new project. For this project, I will also be writing my first grant proposal, in the aim of being able to secure a grant funded income so I can put consulting on hold while I research and write the book. Applying for a highly competitive nationally funded grant seems like a long shot, but someone has to win these, so why not me?

Belonging to professional organizations and presenting at conferences has been vital to my work as an Independent Scholar, as it keeps me engaged in the work of the discipline and connected to other scholars. It keeps me part of the conversation. The first conference I attended was when I was a second-year undergraduate, I attended the Pacific Sociological Conference in Portland. I went by myself because my university did not support these kinds of activities for undergraduates. I was so nervous even though I was just watching. I mingled with real sociologists! I remember I met a heavily tattooed faculty member who was writing a book, about the sociology of tattoos and that is when I realized the power of sociology to study things that I hadn't even imagined were possible. I was so proud of myself for attending that conference, I really got to sense what sociology was all about, outside of the confines of my small university. Looking back at it now, this was my first foray into Independent Scholarship.

My first real experience at a conference was at the American Sociological Association's annual conference four years later. Again, I went by myself, even though most universities host trips for students who are presenting, but my university didn't have any support for undergraduates who were presenting. It is very rare for an undergraduate to present at a national conference, especially by themselves, and especially in a regular session. Seasoned faculty members get nervous doing these presentations, so think how nervous I was! I traveled across the country by myself and figured it out by myself. I apparently had all the makings of an Independent Scholar back then – the grit and determination that are needed to do things on your own.

Getting the paper ready for presentation was a challenge. I did what Independent Scholars do best: I utilized my network of resources, as thin as they were at that time. I had a term paper that I wanted to turn into a conference presentation (which was later my first publication), and I turned to the only scholar I knew outside of my university. (My university mentors weren't interested or available to help me: they were all adjuncts and didn't have the motivation or the bandwidth to go out of their way to help me) and this scholar was a family member who held a PhD in accounting. She scourged the paper, and I remember late nights on the phone with her, trying to get it ready for presentation. Finally, it was accepted and the presentation went well, I was so pleased. This was my first real entrée into the profession; little did I know I would be doing this on my own for decades to come. This story shows the power of mentors.[1] Having that accounting professor help me get my paper ready for presentation, and her having the faith in me that I could do it, meant everything to me. Mentors are critical to all academics, perhaps Independent Scholars especially. "Independent" is a misnomer- no one goes at this endeavor alone, and all Independent Scholars need others, both inside and outside of the academy, to pave the way for us.

I have since presented in dozens of conferences, both in graduate school and as an Independent Scholar. Presenting at conferences, and belonging to professional organizations, is critical to my success as an Independent Scholar. It is always nerve-wracking to present at a conference, but I'm getting better at it. In the last few years, I haven't been able present as often as I would like because of finances, which is one of the drawbacks of being an Independent Scholar. Faculty often get funding for presenting, but as an Independent Scholar you must pay for it or scramble for funding.

Another core tenet of being an Independent Scholar is volunteering. I volunteer on the boards of two nonprofits: NCIS, and Research & Conversations about Bipolar Disorder, Inc. I get a lot out of my involvement with these two boards, not least through meeting more potential collaborators. I met one of my collaborators on the board of R&C, and we routinely do presentations together, keeping my presentation skills sharp. I also volunteer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI. For NAMI, I am an In Our Own Voice Speaker, where I travel around the county speaking about my own experience living with a severe mental illness. I find volunteering to be rewarding and it enhances my experience as an Independent Scholar because it informs my experience and broadens my network, which enhances my potential for scholarship opportunities.

The last, but certainly not least, component of being an Independent Scholar for me is teaching. I have taught at six different colleges and universities, at all levels of my field, from sociology 101 to graduate level courses. Teaching is one of the reasons I wanted to go tenure track, because I love teaching, but I find that adjunct teaching allows me to teach the courses I want to teach, at the schedule I want. I don't have to balance a load of 4-6 courses; I can balance my consulting with teaching with service with research. Teaching helps me connect my research to a new community of learners and helps me connect with perhaps future PhDs or even future Independent Scholars. In my consulting business, I have helped several undergraduates with their theses, and it is very rewarding to work with junior scholars, not to mention the PhD students with whom I have worked. I consider this part of my consulting business to

[1] See chapter 3.1. on mentoring.

be part of my teaching vocation, to reach out on a one-on-one basis to individual students and help them in their scholarly, academic and writing careers.

HOW IT ALL TIES TOGETHER

Wearing all these different hats- publishing, consulting, teaching, presenting, volunteering, and service, all these make me an Independent Scholar. I have been able to cobble together a career composed of things that I love. My career as an Independent Scholar mirror that of the tricorn hat of academia: teaching, scholarly work, and service. I do the same things as an Independent Scholar – but at my own pace and without the pressure of the tenure track. I do not march to the beat of anyone else's drum; I can do what I like when I like. Yes, there are financial constraints, hence the teaching and consulting, but both of those hats give me personal satisfaction and enhance my role as a scholar.

PART 3

MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR OURSELVES

THE POWER AND EMPOWERMENT OF MENTORSHIP FOR SCHOLARS

Tisa M. Anders (USA)

Abstract

In this chapter, I examine mentoring programs in spaces and places where ideas and knowledge are taught and shared. I begin the discussion with a personal touch, illustrating my journey along with a few anecdotes from the two colleagues. An outline of best practices in mentoring programs follows, along with a presentation of established programs in four selected organizations. Finally, I provide recommendations for establishing mentoring programs in scholarly professional organizations such as the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS).

INTRODUCTION

I floundered for six years as a post-PhD before finding my professional home as an Independent Scholar, and I so wished that I had had a mentor during those seemingly in-the-dark years.

I especially have wished for the guidance of a mentor in my professional trajectory as a scholar, and frequently hear similar desires from others for their growth and development as well as for their constituents, e.g., employees, students, scholars. Their answers to the question of "Why?" fall into two main categories: first, desiring professional guidance and support; second, seeking similar aid yet also needing to heal from destructive past mentor-mentee relationships. Two colleagues also struggled deeply during their early-career development:

> *I actually, at times, experience PTSD due to the poor quality of mentorship that I received when younger. This makes me scared to try again.*
>
> (S. Miller, personal communication, June 22, 2023)

> *I . . .[had to] reach out to my own 'feminist scholar' network during my PhD, due to a crisis with abusive supervisors who were trying to have me thrown off my degree.*
>
> (R. Clarke, personal communication, June 9, 2023)

Those times did not need to be that difficult. The three of us – two Independent Scholars and one public health professional – believe that professional mentoring would have provided the support and guidance disappointingly lacking in those periods of struggle.

More recently for this chapter's research, I conducted formal interviews and inquiries with several institutions about their internship programs, focusing on groups that train scholars or provide scholarly professional development: these included a private university, a graduate seminary, a scholar's business, and scholarly professional organizations. Each identified a need for mentoring and responded by establishing one or more such programs, confirming my postulation that mentorships complement other support services and are worth the time, money, and effort to institute them.

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP, AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

From that premise, many questions spring to mind such as: What is a mentor? Why do we need them? Don't we have enough therapists, supervisors, coaches, and other professional helpers to guide us? How is mentoring different than any of them?

Counseling or therapy consists of a paid relationship to deal with issues, while coaching involves a for-hire professional who gives advice and direction (The Association for Talent and Development (ATD), n.d.). Mentorship, on the other hand, has been defined as "a relationship between two people where the mentor provides advice and guidance to their mentee to help them grow, learn, and develop professionally" (Reeves, 2023). Importantly, it is also multi-purpose: "Mentoring involves not only career guidance and support, but also personal, psychological and social aspects" (The University of Rhode Island's (URI) ADVANCE Program Faculty, 2005).

Zust (2017) from Kent State University goes further, differentiating between coaching as short-term and performance-driven with specific, measurable outcomes; and mentoring as a long-term (one to two years) holistic approach, development-driven with informal meetings. Most importantly, she emphasizes that the mentee guides the relationship, including the definition of success. With the mentee in the driver's seat within the context of each organization's program, these multi-faceted aspects of the mentoring process are essential options for them and their mentors.

MENTORING JOURNEYS AND THE PERSONAL TOUCH

As with any significant topic affecting people, personal journeys provide unique and common insights into the topic of mentoring. My interest in career guidance organically grew from my experiences searching for mentors, finding and not finding them. These qualitative pieces of research demonstrate the desire for guidance in our professional lives (Walker, 2017). The sharing of my story also provides practical steps for Independent Scholars to undertake in their journeys as mentees and mentors, along with a few unique pieces during my doctorate (hunger strike, arrest, and jailing).

I sport four academic degrees: BS in Psychology and Religion from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), MS in Guidance and Counseling (Agency and Gerontology specializations) from UNO, Master of Divinity from Iliff School of Theology, and PhD from the University of Denver/Iliff Joint Doctoral Program (JDP). Disappointingly, I primarily guided myself academically with all of them. While the advising relationship is not an official mentoring one, my discouraging experiences in those venues seeded my desire to find nurturing, trusted guidance for self and others on matters relating to our training and careers. These early efforts also demonstrate my search for mentoring before I knew about the concept.

During undergraduate and graduate studies, none of my assigned academic advisors paid close attention to the required courses or electives that best fit my goals. In fact, they actually never asked about my career aspirations. Part of this lack may have been that I chose double majors for my first two degrees. The advisors didn't seem to know how to add other requirements, nor did they bother to find out. In response, I read the requirements over and over in order to become my own expert. The exception happened during the fall semester of my senior year in college. The new advisor strongly suggested I pursue a Bachelor of Science degree due to my numerous science and math courses, but that didn't work since I would have needed an extra semester to pick up missed requirements. Despite the advisor's frustration, I remained adamant about graduating as planned with my BA. Rather than helping, that experience cemented my distrust in academic advisors and reinforced the need to guide myself.

My colleague, S. Miller, also experienced a lack of mentoring in college. As an undergraduate, she received the opposite of mentoring: apathetic, harmful, and hindering advice from her school's premed advising office. The university required a letter of recommendation from that department in order for a student to apply to medical school. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond her control, she did poorly academically during her first semester. In response, the office methodically informed her: "You are not eligible for medical school." They did not ask about the circumstances nor offer resources to assist her. "No one helped me in any way, shape, or form. I cringe when thinking of the influence that the office had as well as any mentors who don't take their role seriously," explains Miller. Fortunately, due to her drive and independence, she did not allow that bad advice to stop her. Instead, she found ways to raise her grade point average and continues with her dream to become a physician. Unfortunately, the incident cemented a deep distrust of others in positions of guidance.

For me, lack of guidance, overall, persisted in my next two degrees as well. Even though I continued to self-guide during my Master of Divinity, that degree program proceeded fairly smoothly due to direction from my minister and home church. In contrast, despite some nurture and mentoring, I found the guidance on my doctoral work particularly vexing as well as wider issues that encompassed the Iliff campus. To begin, most JDP students averaged three years for coursework. I had no intention of taking that long for the basics. In response, I got creative in finding alternatives since the entire program had wedded the required-course schedule to a three-year format. I ingeniously found equivalents or designed independent studies to meet my needs. I reveled in achieving my two-year goal. Unfortunately, that speed slowed with events that took place after my initial guidance from one of the junior faculty members, Dr. Peabody (pseudonym).

During the pre-coursework interview of my doctorate, Dr Peabody strongly advised that I should find a foundational discipline for my multi-disciplinary degree. I explored several and landed on history. To this day, I continue as a professional historian. She has since been my primary professor who continues to guide me informally on a variety of professional matters.

ACTIVISM, PEER MENTORSHIP, AND BOOK REVIEWS

The sad irony about Dr. Peabody's skill as a mentor and professor is that they came into question in a brutal tenure battle during the second year of my doctorate, which sparked a three-year student campaign. We protested the wrongful actions in her case as well as a long stream of additional leadership abuses at the school, including institutional racism.[1] I served as one of the leaders in this joint venture of master's and doctoral students. Several older students with activist backgrounds guided us as did a group of allied faculty and some outside actors. As our unofficial mentors, they helped and supported us each step of the way during those dark, difficult times. For example, we received direction on different methods and strategies for nonviolent action. This context intensely demonstrated to me the power of mentorship, as well as playing a pivotal role in my later career decisions.

The seminary administration and Board continued to ignore us despite repeated requests for dialogue. To decide next steps, we students held an emergency meeting where a senior professor appealed to us:

[1] Iliff made a mockery of tenure. In a legal process, Dr. Peabody received tenure and promotion and resigned. On other matters, the all-white makeup of Iliff's senior leadership, from its founding until after 1997, provides an apt representation of the institutional racism at the school. Another leadership abuse took place in the 1980s during the divestment campaigns against South African apartheid. The Board refused to divest until students protested.

"If the school can deny this excellent scholar and teacher tenure, what is next? We must stop these abuses now." His words rallied us into the final protest stage wherein five of us felt called to begin a hunger strike that subsequently lasted 31 days. We started the extended fast in our seminary chapel. Unfortunately, instead of talking with us, the Iliff leadership chose to arrest us for trespassing. That night remains etched in my mind. The police marched to the front of the chapel, surrounded us, and carted eight of us off to jail in paddy wagons. Fortunately, volunteer attorneys through the National Lawyers Guild volunteered expert legal advice. The charges were dropped and the school eventually agreed to mediation. We all ultimately finished our degrees and pursued our careers. However, I learned that I never wanted anything to do with a tenure-track position, and that activism suits me, so desired to find ways to combine scholarship and reforms in my post-PhD career.

But where did I go from there? I did not have any peers or faculty members on nontraditional paths. While tenure-track held no interest for me; neither did adjunct teaching due to the low pay and lack of job security, I turned to my passion and talent for research and writing, through which I could pursue those avenues *sans* formal teaching yet including some form of activism. As such, I began to consider myself a scholar activist, and my self-guidance kicked back in.

For the activist component, I decided to remain in the nonprofit sector. My introduction to this world took place in an internship in Washington, DC as part of my Master of Divinity. I found resonance in the freedom of expression in the field along with their large offerings of programs and services. I ended up working in senior nonprofit management for 22 years (pre-doctorate, throughout the PhD, and post-PhD) and finding ways to continue research, writing, and publishing. This part of my career covered staff positions in three Colorado organizations as well as a volunteer post with a Kansas museum.

Logically, my initial priority as a scholar became to find ways to continue research, writing, and publishing. The first step manifested toward the end of my doctoral studies. The JDP sent out an email from *The International Journal on World Peace* (IJWP) requesting reviewers for books. The journal fit my research interests since International Relations comprised one of my areas of specialization. The reviews seemed to be the perfect beginning for publications and a win-win-win situation: free books and publishing portfolio for me, reviews for the journals. From my first piece with them (Anders, 2003) until my last one (Anders, 2018), IJWP remained my primary source for reviews.[2] This led to similar publications in others: *The History Teacher*, *Peace & Change*, *Nebraska History*, and *Agricultural History*.[3]

MENTORSHIP THROUGH NETWORKING

I knew about the vital importance of scholarly organizations as a means to share my scholarship, to learn from fellow scholars, and to engage in the infamous task of networking. With history as my primary discipline, I gravitated toward several appropriate groups such as the Oral History Society, Agricultural History Society, Western Association of Women Historians, and Peace History Society, and loved presenting my work, especially the feedback and meeting others. A delightful example of networking took place during a conference in Oklahoma. I attended a session on Mexican migration even though it took place in the last time slot on the final day. I ended up being the only audience member and, as soon as the Q&A began, all eyes turned to me. I didn't know much, because I just had started my research on former *betabeleros* (beet field workers of Mexican origin) and their contributions to the western Nebraska sugar industry (my home locale). I shared the beginnings of my work and asked for

[2] Disappointingly, IJWP closed their doors and ceased publication in late 2022.
[3] As of 14 June 2023, scholarly journals have published 26 of my reviews.

tips. Shortly after the conference, one of the presenters sent me a Call for Proposals for chapters in an anthology, as she thought my topic fit well with the book. To my delight and surprise, she and her co-editor approved my proposal and, although the first draft did not turn out very well, they patiently worked with me to restructure and hone a better thesis and overall piece (Anders, 2013). I am forever grateful for their kind guidance and assistance. More chapters on the *betabeleros* soon followed in other edited collections, and also attracted a research grant.[4]

Two of my other research topics also have led to invaluable networking and mutual scholarly aid: my doctoral dissertation figure, nineteenth-century US author/activist L. Maria Child (Anders, 2002) for which I eventually received a publishing contract (in process) for a general-public edition of her spiritual journey; and Junius G. Groves, an African-American farmer and entrepreneur in eastern Kansas to whom I was introduced by one of his relatives. We received a research grant[5] as well as presented papers together on his life and work at numerous conferences. This also opened up opportunities to volunteer in the arena of public history along with an invitation to write and publish individual and group profiles for BlackPast.Org, premier African American history online reference center.

SCHOLARLY IDENTITY

Despite these phenomenal opportunities, I still did not have a clear sense of my professional identity. I often received the judgment of "too scholarly" from the nonprofit world whereas fellow academics viewed me as "not scholarly enough." At almost all the conferences, I was the only non-academic scholar. I received warm welcomes, but seemed to be viewed as an oddity. People often commented: "I never met one before." Where did I belong? I found my answer in 2008. Somehow that year, I came across the Call for Papers for an October conference in Berkeley, California of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. I couldn't believe my eyes—an entire meeting of scholars like me as well as an organization for scholarly professionals like me. They accepted my proposal and off to Berkeley I flew. I never have looked back. The term, "Independent Scholar," immediately resonated with me and NCIS has been my primary professional organization since that phenomenal first.

LESSONS LEARNED

What would I have wanted a mentor to tell and/or teach me during my doctorate and the six years between graduation and finding NCIS? The main advice during the PhD would've been to begin working on my dissertation topic throughout the coursework and examination phases.[6] No professors counseled me to start developing my thesis ideas in those earlier stages. When entering the dissertation proposal phase, I ended up changing my topic to match some of my coursework and one of my exams, otherwise I would have back tracked to square one with that original idea. The secondary thesis choice turned out marvelously, but, to this day, I wonder why no one advised me differently? Whenever I meet a prospective or new PhD student, that's one of the first things I mention to them.

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[4] Lola Homsher Endowment Fund Research Grant, Wyoming State Historical Society, 2008. This topic actually turned into an Oral History Project. I soon realized that, even though all the Latinx persons I interviewed accepted me as an interviewer and insider from our geographic area (third generation in the town), I still was a white woman going into a community of color. To provide actual representation from the Latinx community, local activist and former *betabelera* Rose Elia Cobos teamed up with me. After that first solo-authored chapter, Cobos and I co-authored chapters in two additional anthologies.

[5] Edward N. Tihen Historical Research Grant, Kansas Historical Society, 2004-2005.

[6] This paragraph refers to the structure of U.S. doctoral programs, in which the candidate must complete coursework and pass examinations on these topics before commencing their dissertation.

The primary career deficit that I experienced came in the guise of post-doctoral fellowships. Having talked with peers at academic conferences, I decided one or two would be enjoyable and a boost to my scholarly career with skill-building and networking. Unfortunately, I waited too long and didn't start applying until beyond the five-year mark after graduation. I talked with a few fellowships to see if someone in my situation – a non-academic scholar who didn't know about the strict early-career requirement – would be considered. They encouraged me to apply with explanations. Disappointingly, no offers came my way.

After a while, I gave up on fellowships, but not on mentorships. In order to provide the guidance and nurture that I missed, I created internship programs during my many years directing nonprofits. These teaching and learning opportunities combined the usual guidance of supervision, training, and mentorship. During the interns' interviews, I explained:

> *Two dynamics take place during your time with us. You are here to assist the organization wherever needed which, simultaneously, provides your lessons in overall nonprofit work. Secondly, you direct the other piece: what areas do you want to learn to enhance your skills?*

We offered formal opportunities (connected to a college or graduate program) and informal opportunities (volunteers wanting nonprofit experience). I employed several best practices: an official application process with interview and references; volunteer packets with guides and expectations; regular supervisory sessions. To this day (2023), former interns contact me for job and graduate school references, and several of us have transitioned from the professional relationship to friendships. My colleague, Dr. R. Clarke, acted in like manner with the founding of her business and listing of available mentors for members (R. Clarke, personal communication, June 29, 2023).

As shown, my search for formal guidance throughout my degree programs and the initial post-PhD years often proved unsuccessful. When that happened, self-guidance kicked in and forward I went. I appreciate those self-directed efforts, implied instruction-by-example of professors and conference attendees, and the pockets of mentoring sprinkled throughout the years. However, I often felt lonely and frustrated and would have welcomed more directed assistance. My desire to "pay it forward" in the nonprofit internships arose from that lack in my own career.

MENTORSHIPS IN ORGANIZATIONS: BEST PRACTICES AND DIFFERENT MODELS

In the ever-changing landscape of academia (e.g., online teaching and over-reliance on adjuncts), mentorship for scholars during their training and throughout their careers remains a vital need. Organizational guidance through best practices is crucial in the creation of any formal mentoring program, and these are applicable, needed, and popular in a variety of settings. I therefore explore best practices in these contexts, and provide examples of mentoring programs in two postsecondary educational settings and two scholarly professional organizations.

Several sources set forth best practices in mentoring (Nick et al., 2012; Ko & Zhadko, 2023; Michigan State University, n.d.). These guidelines contribute tested and/or researched guidelines and suggestions for replicating similar programs, and most provide details for every stage of needs assessment, program development, and program implementation. For instance, the University of Rhode Island Faculty Mentoring Handbook (2005) covers best practices for mentors, mentees, and the department chair along with tips, models, successful mentoring for underrepresented groups, and helpful forms. While each organization is unique, most share their processes for investigating the need for a mentoring program and then developing and implementing them.[7]

First, the need for a mentoring program must be explored. As Dr R. Clarke says of her decision to offer a mentoring list as part of her startup's option: "It appears good mentorship practice is 'patchy' at best in academia. But good mentorship, and professional networking that can arise from such, is vital for advancement in academia" (personal communication, June 25, 2023). Identifying these needs goes hand-in-hand with establishing the perceived benefits. As the URI ADVANCE Program states: "Encouraging relationships that foster cooperation, safety, and creative and innovative work through collaboration will benefit everyone" (2005, 3). For the mentee, mentoring offers encouragement, feedback, pragmatic tips (e.g., time management), and scholarly advice. Mentors receive satisfaction in assisting the next generation. Finally, mentoring often increases retention, commitment, and productivity for the institution (ADVANCE, 2005).

When establishing a mentoring program, the model or models that might work best for an organization must be chosen, and I discovered a rich variety of formal, longer-term programs mixed in with shorter, temporary offerings. These include traditional (more experienced person provides the support and guidance to a less experienced person), alternative (e.g., multiple mentoring or a team of mentors, peer mentors), and collective (mentoring built into the organization or department on a permanent basis) (ADVANCE, 2005).

In the best-practices resources and my organizational-specific research, clearly communicated expectations stood out as another critical component of any mentoring program. Each of the handbooks or guides lists numerous obligations and responsibilities for mentees, mentors, and institutions. The Michigan State University's (n.d.) blog offers step-by-step suggestions for mentors and mentees on the topics of building productive mentor-mentee relationships as well as fostering career development. While the two post-secondary institutions profiled here currently do not publicize many details on their websites, the scholarly professional organizations such as the American Academy of Religion (AAR) do an excellent job in communicating this mentoring-program best practice. At a glance, potential mentees know the expectations for them and mentors, how to sign up, and what to do at the annual meeting to access this service (Have, 2021).

The mentoring program for undergraduates at the **University of Denver's CWC Leadership Scholars** caught my attention in 2022 when I volunteered as a mentor, and I conducted a telephone interview with Dr. Trisha Teig, Faculty Director, and Mitra Chamanbahar, Program Coordinator to learn more (personal communication, May 26, 2023). Their impressive Scholars program continues the legacy of Colorado Women's College (acquired by DU in 2016) which emphasizes added support for underrepresented groups of female students such as women of color, first-generation college, and LGBTQ+. Dr. Teig added the mentoring program in 2018, her research having shown that students with a mentor or sponsor from these groups had better chances to succeed, and CWC embedded peer mentoring into the curriculum itself along with an additional short-term offering.

Incoming students are matched in their first quarter with older peer mentors by interests and majors, and begin meeting with their mentors at least monthly throughout the first year. CWC provides training for the mentors, especially with the establishment of expectations and boundaries. Teig adds

[7] URI staff advise: "Although there is some specific focus on mentoring new female faculty, the principles outlined in this document are applicable to all mentoring relationships . . . and regardless of the gender or ethnicity of specific mentors and mentees" (ADVANCE, 2005, 1).

foundational support in a required course during each student's first quarter, focusing on helping the student discern what help they need and how to advocate for themselves.

In the last quarter of their first year, the students write a reflection paper about their experiences by responding to five prompts, and the program is evaluated from that assignment along with other anecdotal accounts. Chamanbahar also tracks all aspects of the mentoring program, and she and Teig remain resources for the students throughout their time in the program. When the young women graduate, CWC hosts a banquet in their honor and offer a three-week mentoring program Adopt a Graduate, through which short-term mentors encourage and advise the graduates as they move into the next phase of their careers. As with the peer mentoring, Chamanbahar clearly communicates the expectations for the mentors and mentees. I was privileged to attend the banquet and work with two of the graduates in this send-off program. My two mentees and their fellow graduates inspire me, and this affirming, nurturing community has aided their success as college graduates. Teig ended our interview with praises for the mentoring process: "This is a very important part of our program. We want to normalize mentoring as part of one's life" (personal communication, May 26, 2023).

Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado offers an example of a mentoring program for graduate students. Named the "Career Program," all mentors must be Iliff alumni, so as a double alumna of Iliff I signed up as a mentor in 2021. The program's configuration is particularly fascinating: the school started the program in 2021 to increase student enrollment, and partners with a global company, The Mentor Collective (MC) as they wanted to add additional points of contact between the school and their constituents, particularly for the Global Majority students.

Iliff chose MC due to the need for their expertise. No Iliff staff possessed the expertise or time to conduct all the needed phases: recruitment, training, matching, and evaluation/follow-up. MC lists 700+ unique mentorship programs along with 160+ partnerships resulting in 160,000 mentoring relationships via "expert-led research, services and technology" (MC, n.d.). They rely extensively on technology for all aspects, particularly through their app and website. I registered through their website and received training via a group zoom webinar.

Iliff signed a three-year contract with the company, with Dr. C. Kelsey, Dean of the Chapel and Spiritual Formation providing the potential match of names to MC and ensuring all proceeds well. The app allows a mentor to flag issues for Dr. Kelsey to address. The first-year's enrollment (during the pandemic) totaled 72 of their 160 students; 2022-23, 46 of 154 students signed up (D. Kelsey, personal communication, May, 23, 2023). Mentees and mentors share positive results.

The American Academy of Religion (AAR) is one of the most well-known scholarly professional organizations in the academic study of religion and offers two mentoring programs. Their Underrepresented Scholars Program is a one-year (August to July) service available to AAR members from all walks of scholarship: graduate students, faculty of any rank or position, and scholars working outside the academy. Four specialty committees nominate and approve the mentors. The Mentoring Sub-committee attempts to match based on applications (AAR, Underrepresented, 2021).

AAR's second program, Have a Cup of Coffee, is a short-term program like DU's Adopt a Graduate mentorship. It connects member mentees with experienced member professionals for a one-hour session at each annual meeting. The organization had various forms of mentorship in the past, but no formal one (Matt Viesen, AAR's Director of Membership, personal communication, June 13, 2023). They created Have a Cup of Coffee in 2016 in response to members' requests for opportunities to connect with their peers in person. AAR sends out a call for mentors each fall in preparation for the annual November gathering. Each mentor fills out a form, selects available meet-up times, and provides a bit more on their professional background. Mentees then sign up online prior to the annual meeting, before which the pairs are introduced by email. Viesen reports participation has increased each year, and that many pairs continue after the meeting. Accordingly, AAR is considering an expansion of member-nurture by developing a year-round mentoring program.

The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) also has demonstrated a commitment to mentoring by adding it to their Strategic Plan. The organization started a formal program in 2019 in order to "[create] a structure of mentoring and training to better equip SSR members for excellent scholarship" (SSSR, n.d.). From 2019 through 2022, SSSR structured the mentoring component into three groups, each one comprised of a senior mentor, one early PhD (less than five years post-PhD) and two graduate students. These cohorts met together at least two times annually over a three-year period. The organization funded $500/year stipends for the senior mentors and one meal for the groups at their annual meeting (SSSR, n.d.).

Due to SSSR's desire to mentor a greater number of students, the above format remains in flux with changes to begin in 2023 (K. Hutchison, personal communication, June 20, 2023). Thus, for their next annual meeting, attendees will be invited to sign up to be mentors or mentees. A volunteer committee will match them according to research interests. SSSR will provide the pairs with gift cards for coffee in order to arrange their own meet ups. This financial assistance, in any amount, stands out. Not many organizations provide that. SSSR's leadership will reassess this new format after one year.

As demonstrated, guidelines or best practices are needed to ensure the integrity of mentoring programs. Many sources within academia and beyond provide a variety of guidance. Thus, no entity needs to start from scratch in this day and age. The models or types of mentoring programs are dependent on the capacity of the organization, along with the needs of the staff, mentors, and mentees.

CREATION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

In addition to institutional and general scholarly professional organizations, Independent Scholars comprise a unique, yet growing, sub-group of scholars. My own journey with, and without mentoring, shows the importance of this guidance for non-traditional scholars, especially in early career. In like manner to DU's and Iliff's alumni as rich resource pools for mentors, long-time Independent Scholars can be tapped for early-career ISs. NCIS is one of the leading scholarly professional groups for this sector, so how might such an organization provide leadership in this important way? Based on the best practices and mentoring programs presented above, as well as on another mentoring configuration offered by an Independent Scholar through her business, I suggest recommendations to do so.

When I became an Independent Scholar in 2002, not many of us were around. I, in fact, didn't even know the term let alone that a whole group of IS's existed beyond the walls of universities and colleges. As the landscape of academia continues to grow and shift, our numbers simultaneously rise, mostly in response to the constriction of available, permanent teaching jobs. NCIS's social media statistics demonstrate this growth. Our Facebook page in 2016 showed 390 followers which had grown to 1,700 in 2023. Twitter has followed suit with 500+ followers in 2016 and 1,549 by 2023 (NCIS Quarterly Board Report, personal correspondence, November 2016; NCIS Facebook; NCIS Twitter).

Organizational capacity remains a primary consideration when planning for the expansion or contraction of programming for NCIS. Even larger institutions, such as DU and Iliff with paid, full-time staff, must consider funding, time constraints, and staff capabilities in their decisions on how best to provide mentoring and guidance to their students. For instance, DU's CWC would like to expand their Adopt a Graduate program into a more permanent offering but are limited by funding and staff-time constraints (T. Teig & M. Chamanbahar, personal communication, May 16, 2023). Many professional scholarly organizations organize themselves in a structure that includes only a small paid staff and then several all-volunteer committees. AAR and SSSR fit this category with the former, a larger society with several paid staff; and SSSR, smaller with only one employee. NCIS, like them, is a professional scholarly organization but falls into the structure of no paid staff. Thus, in addition to adding new programming such as mentoring, volunteer members handle the organization's day-to-day operations.

When searching for scholarly organizations with mentoring components, I posted to NCIS's Facebook page and requested recommendations. Dr. R. Clarke responded. Her business, Minerva Recruitment Ltd, lists available mentors on her global community resource and premium job board. Clarke's journey to create her business, and include the mentor list, is intimately interconnected with her status as an IS. Her organizational structure provides the closest example for a similar component for NCIS due to the all-volunteer nature of Dr. Clarke's listing.

The impetus for Clarke to include a mentor list started with a very difficult situation during her doctorate. She explains:

> *I struggled from the start of my PhD, particularly due to faculty accepting my project onto a PhD programme without understanding it themselves. Looking back on it, I believe those supervisors who struggled with my project and became combative (or, in some cases, abusive) towards me, did so because they wanted to change my project to something they felt "comfortable" guiding (personal communication, June 25, 2023).*

Additionally, she has witnessed the lack of support for other women and historically marginalized scholars. Accordingly, she "sought to leverage the global community to provide 'alternative' mentorship support access (via self-referral to the mentor listing)" (personal communication, June 25, 2023). Her target audience includes faculty (academics), students, and others like ISs who choose to leave academia.

According to her company's website, the volunteer virtual mentors "from across different disciplines and sectors, [are] eager to 'pay-it-forward' and improve the sector for all" (Minerva Recruiting, 2023). Clarke starts the process with a Google submission form (currently pinned to the company profile on Twitter) for potential mentors, including a space for areas of expertise. She presently does not post any expectations or guidelines for the mentoring but understands the benefit of that. She responds to queries or concerns from mentors or mentees. In a more active role, she encourages fellow scholars and professionals to volunteer in this capacity. Only paid members have access to the mentoring whereas any vetted individual can volunteer as mentor. Members self-match with potential mentors.

Clarke helpfully offers additional areas of concern. First, she encourages men to serve as mentors. Thus far, only women have volunteered in this capacity for her mentor list even though men also utilize her web resource. Second, she broadens her needs assessment beyond specific individuals or even institutions (Clarke, 2021). She suggests the problems start with our academic systems:

> *I believe they [her professors] did not have the appropriate mentorship/guidance themselves (as ECRs [Early Career Researchers] in the relevant institutions I was associated with before graduating) - therefore, it may be that the failure was not down to the individuals, but rather the institution and system we were all operating in. It failed all of us, by not providing the appropriate mentorship support for faculty (and, by extension, their PhD students) (personal communication, June 25, 2023).*

Dr. V. Cao, fellow IS and also founder of a career-support platform (Free the PhD), concurs with Clarke: "The historical mentor-trainee relationship within most academic research institutions makes it difficult for many graduate students or even postdoctoral fellows to clearly define their goals. . . ." (2020, 214).

My recommendations for a mentoring program for organizations such as NCIS mirror much of Clarke's work. Time and energy limits of an all-volunteer organization remain the main impediments to a more expansive offering. This dynamic affects Independent Scholars even more deeply. Unlike academics, very few IS's land jobs which cover paid time to contribute to their scholarly disciplines. This includes substantive participation in professional societies. The demand for mentors, nonetheless, remains strong in the year 2023 and beyond as demonstrated in this chapter's exploration. If NCIS or a similar organization chooses to pursue this possibility, I advocate starting with a vetted mentor list similar to Dr. Clarke's along with creating expectations of mentors and mentees in line with AAR's and SSSR's guides.[8] These components would be listed on the organizational website. As such, the web platform would be crucial in the beginning and throughout the life of the program. Matching would be the responsibility of the mentees based on the information reflected in the list. Organizational membership would be required for mentors and mentees. The society would need at least one contact person or a two- or three-person committee to create the necessary programmatic pieces. On an ongoing basis, one volunteer would be necessary as the coordinator/contact person. They would address questions or concerns on an ongoing basis as well as work closely with the website administrator.

Even though this model provides minimal structure and staff, it communicates to constituents and the wider scholarly world (academia and ISs) about the importance and availability of this guidance. Accordingly, I concur with R. and B. Gross's ending to their book *Independent Scholarship: Promise, Problems, and Prospects*: "It is to be hoped that the work of the Independent Scholar will continue to flourish in an environment of support and appreciation" (1983, 53).

CONCLUSION

Support and guidance for our scholarly careers continues to be essential whether in our academic training or professional lives. Postsecondary educational contexts can offer this added support and guidance to students while simultaneously presenting pay-it-forward opportunities for alumni mentors. Upon graduation, extended guidance through programs in our professional affiliations can help decrease unnecessary detours, frustration, and loneliness while replacing the dynamics with helpful guidance, tips, and a network of likeminded colleagues. Numerous models or types of mentoring programs are available. The one we choose depends on organizational capacity as well as the best fit for our students or scholars. Fortunately, many current resources provide guidance on each step for the creation of mentorships.

Critical areas for additional exploration on mentorships include the role our current systems play in enhancing or blocking adequate mentoring along with recommendations on how to improve and change those systems, if needed. Finally, funding must be increased and available for these critical programs as we care for and strengthen current and future generations of scholars within academia and beyond.

[8] They are discussed earlier in the chapter with each society's profile.

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BEING AN "INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR" IN HISTORY: MY TAKE, SIX YEARS IN

Phillip Reid (USA)

I suspect that being an Independent Scholar is like being married – no two people do it exactly the same way. I also suspect that being an Independent Scholar has something in common with being an Associate Manager for Compliance – that no one sets off to pursue it as a clear career goal from an early stage. In my discipline – history – those intentionally pursuing a career in the discipline take one of three tracks: academia, public history (museums and historic sites), or archival work in the public or private sector. Why not Independent Scholarship? Because most people need to make a living, and Independent Scholarship in history is highly unlikely to provide that.

That's why most Independent Scholars are not full-time Independent Scholars. I'm a unicorn in that respect; I don't have to make a living (though getting paid for my work would be awfully nice), and being a full-time Independent Scholar is, so far, the best way I've found to live a professional life that suits me. My hat's off to those who pursue Independent Scholarship as a side gig to their day jobs; for me, scholarship is way too demanding for that. I need lazier hobbies.

I don't want to come off as more secure and settled in this than I am; it's a daily work-in-progress, and I have days where I'm content with it and days when it scares the hell out of me and days when I don't want to do it anymore. I much prefer the days, like today, when I'm content with it, and looking forward to what's next. For the rest of this, I think I'll focus on how I think I can maximize the time I spend in that head space; that should elicit most or all of anything useful I might have to say about being an Independent Scholar.

For those contemplating pursuing a doctorate, here is what I think is true, thirteen years after making that decision at age 42. If academia is your goal, you need to get into a top prestige school, crush the program, and specialize in what your advisors tell you to, to be a strong candidate for whatever tenure-track posts might be available when you finish. Then, be willing to move wherever your best offer comes from – out of your native country if need be. Those looking to work in public history or the archives of a public or private institution have more flexibility in where they go and what they do. Anyone at this stage considering Independent Scholarship should either know going into it that they are highly unlikely to make a living at it, and should know that their individual situation permits that (obviously, if that means a spouse will be providing the sole income for the household indefinitely, that is a joint discussion and decision) – or, should have a reasonably-solid idea of what they are going to do to earn a living while pursuing scholarship on the side. If you decide that this is realistic and attractive to you, then you are freer to choose a school and a specialty that suit your individual needs and proclivities, without worrying so much about how it looks on a CV to someone unfamiliar with your special interests. In my case, anyone working professionally in my specialty – maritime history – would look at where I went to school and get it right away. No one else would have a clue.

In reality, even academics are doing scholarship on the side – that's an important thing to realize for those pursuing a traditional academic career or who already have their doctorates but find themselves shut out of those jobs. One of the biggest frustrations in the academy these days is that the classical model of the scholar-professor has eroded to a near-fiction, but the powers that be within the institutions – and the governments that fund them less and less and meddle in them more and more –

still expect that model to function, as if their professors all possess Hermione Granger's time-turner. The advantage that academics – and some others employed as professional historians – have is institutional support. That means that the employer will, at least sometimes, pay for travel and fees to attend conferences, and provide sabbaticals and even extra funding for major research projects. So, the professional full-time employed historian may have the ability to do serious scholarship – at least occasionally – built into their jobs.

An "Independent Scholar," on the other hand, generally doesn't. Even if that person has the time to pursue research and writing, acquiring any necessary funds to access sources and materials will have to come from grants or crowd-funding or their own bank account. That person could be a dentist, an Associate Manager for Compliance, or even a foot soldier in the army of adjunct professors and instructors now staffing our institutions of higher learning on the cheap, who are generally ineligible for the research support offered to tenured faculty. The number-one challenge for the independent historian, then, is that of procuring funding for research.

Success in that all-important endeavor is likely down to two factors: talent, and interests that dovetail nicely with the interests of those with the money. Talent gets glossed-over all the time in advice-writing; perhaps it makes people uncomfortable; I don't know. Perhaps advice-writers know that talent isn't something they can inculcate with their advice, so they leave it alone. It's too important to leave alone.

Anyone who successfully completes a doctorate has talent – at least enough to get into the pool of credentialed beginner scholars. There's a difference, though, between the ability to complete a big research project under supervision (the dissertation) and the ability to conceive, plan out, and execute such a project entirely on one's own. The common practice of writing a first book based on the dissertation is a nice bridge between the two – it certainly was for me. I'm proud of that book, but I may be prouder of the second one, because it was 100% mine from the get-go – my idea, my plan, no institutional support, I raised all the money, and I wrote it exactly as I saw fit and it's being published by a good academic press as-is. Clearly, I have the talent to do this. I also have the commitment and dedication to do what's necessary to turn that talent into a product I can put out into the world. (Talent and dedication are mutually dependent; one is never a substitute for the other, but one cannot work without the other.)

As for interests that dovetail with the people who have the money – well, sort of. I wrote a piece yesterday called "Thoughts on getting (and not getting) grants," and I explain in there how my interests do not (so far) dovetail sufficiently with the people handing out the few big grants for which I'm eligible, but I've found smaller grants awarded by more specialized groups that have made my work possible. This is why I wrote earlier that if you're pursuing traditional academia, make sure your area of research is something that you're confident is fashionable in the discipline, or you're setting yourself up with a serious disadvantage from the get-go.

There's a difference between doing work that doesn't need to be done and in doing work that isn't fashionable. There's overlap between the two, for sure, but only some. No scholar should refuse to listen to those with experience and accomplishment when it comes to work that needs to be done – questions that need to be asked and sources that need to be mined. It's at the intersection of those external realities and your own interests and abilities that great projects are found. You can't sustain a major scholarly project if it doesn't turn you on. (It won't turn you on every day, of course; there will be plenty of random Tuesdays when you're heartily sick of it, but that's true of any major long-term demanding endeavor.) I'll say with confidence, though, that the big grants follow disciplinary fashion, just like academic hiring committees. That means that a realistic Independent Scholar who is not working in a fashionable area will need to put extra effort into finding the smaller specialty grants that can make a project possible – though they won't pay a mortgage or buy groceries.

There are positive signs of change here; in my discipline, I've seen (and applied for, unsuccessfully) a new big fellowship specifically for scholars with no access to traditional institutional support – and no requirement to relocate to a specific place of research – introduced in the past couple of years. I've noticed that some big traditional grants now have language specifically encouraging independent researchers to apply. While this is anecdotal, it seems that the discipline is more aware of the fact that more of its practitioners are working outside the tenured or tenure-track academic worlds; and has perhaps realized the irony that graduate students on stipends, who have long received discounts, have more money than "Independent Scholars" who are fully-credentialed. Professional association dues and journal subscription fees are acknowledging this, in some cases, with special rates for "independent," "unemployed," or "underemployed" members/subscribers. This sort of thing is materially helpful for those of us doing this for no income.

Still, operating on the margins of disciplinary fashion will continue to create a disadvantage, and small specialty grants, intended to cover only discrete, specific research expenses, will continue to be much easier to obtain for those of us doing that. Repositories with endowments allowing them to offer short-term fellowships for visiting scholars tend to be located in places where those stipends will not cover real lodging and eating expenses for mature adults – let alone mature adults with spouses and dogs. These fellowships also come with minimum-stay requirements which may or may not fit your project or your life. If they do, they can be helpful, if you can supplement them. If you and your partner do not mind being separated for weeks at a time, this may not be a problem for you. It's a no-go for us.

For the book I just finished, I raised $4,586.77 from four small grants and one crowdfunding campaign, from family and friends. That money saw me through two on-site research trips, to a site within a day's drive of my home, with my wife and dog, and a few digital reproductions of documents from archives in England. If the project had required longer on-site visits, or air travel, it would not have been feasible.

So, that would be the other practical piece of advice I would give to someone considering this. You have to pick projects that can be done on a shoestring budget, assuming that your applications for the bigger grants to do the bigger projects don't succeed – which, statistically speaking, they probably won't. (That does not mean you shouldn't try. You should. Over and over again.) Independent scholars should know everything there is to know about what source material is available on-line, and what can be digitized, for a fee, and e-mailed. It is far easier to get a grant that will cover digital reproduction costs than it is to get one to cover air travel and lodging.

Besides research costs to access primary sources, you'll likely face paywalls for academic journals you need, and perhaps you'll need some institutional affiliation for access to certain archival collections. NCIS can help with both of those; and if you're a member of a scholarly association, that group's journal will be a benefit of membership. If you have a local university, you can probably get a public borrowing card there. You can't use it for ILL, but your local public library can help there; it's rare that my public library can't get me something ILL; they're plugged into the same lending network that the university libraries are, so they can even get non-digitized theses and dissertations.

In the end, if you have the talent and dedication to see a project through to a final product – major journal article in the field, monograph, documentary, or any number of other worthwhile contributions that I can't even think of, then you have the talent, and probably the dedication, to do another one. With any luck, and some effort on your part, exposure and an expanded professional network will help you with subsequent projects – and the funding for them. I'm only six years into my Independent Scholarship, and my second book won't come out until April (it's the last day of November). My fourth journal article just came out, and I have two more coming out next year, so I'm putting out a lot of stuff more or less at once, and it'll take some time to see what that gets me in terms of e-mails with exciting offers and ideas (as opposed to spam and gratuitous solicitations). I have four grant apps pending, with notifications due from next month until March. One of those is a European Research Council five-year grant; the Institute applying for it asked me to participate. I was part of an earlier ERC proposal for a project headquartered in Italy. They turned it down this time, but that won't be the last we hear from them.

I joke that I don't have a PhD in history; I have a PhD in patience. Things move slowly in this world, from application processing to publication timetables to – well, getting a degree that takes six years in the first place. On good days, doing this feels like a brave but sane and exciting way to live a self-directed, free life. On bad days, it feels like hurtling through the blackness of space with my eyes shut tight. By nature, I crave security and a long-term plan. This life permits neither. It has required me to accept uncertainty and an openness to letting one project lead to another as interest, and practicability, suggest. It requires that I have faith that my ability, and my accomplishments so far, will make possible further efforts, perhaps even including the eventual awarding of a grant that will actually pay me to do this work, at least for a little while. Meanwhile, it also requires my ego to forego the financial validation that we may not realize we rely on until we don't have it.

For me, right now, full-time Independent Scholarship is, to paraphrase Churchill, the worst job I could have, except for all the other ones. It allows us to live where and how we please, while my wife pursues a career she has spent 25 years in so far, and supports us comfortably, and I get up every day and do work that I'm good at and that means something to me. Whether or not Independent Scholarship is right for any specific individual is about as dependent on that individual's specific circumstances as anything I can imagine. If what I've written here helps one such individual think about it more constructively, it was worth doing.

"HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE IN OUR LIVES TO DO SOMETHING GREAT?": WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT CREATIVITY AND PERSEVERANCE FROM A BROADWAY COMPOSER

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Abstract

Working as an Independent Scholar, I have long struggled with the issue of motivation in the absence of outside tenure pressure, and sometimes wondering how I could get myself to keep doing the work for which there was no guarantee of publication success, when I was already facing a trail of rejections. And then, from far outside the world of scholarship, I found an unlikely source of inspiration. When I first saw the movie musical Tick, tick...Boom! *it resonated in ways I could not have imagined. What really spoke to me was the hero/composer Jonathan Larson's seemingly endless work on his never-produced musical, Superbia, which echoed my fear of the book I had been working on for years never getting published. This essay will therefore chronicle my recent scholarly journey, and how I drew strength from this unlikely source. It will describe how over the last year or so, in a series of academic writing workshops whose teachings dovetailed nicely with the musical's themes, I considered multiple questions. These included "How do you know when it's time to let go?" when deciding whether to keep pursuing this project, or turn to something else, and the questions of "why" and whether my motivation was "fear or love" when dealing with (and overcoming) the issues of writer's block and fear of failure*[1] *In conclusion, this essay will show the possibilities of looking beyond the academy for what speaks to you and what motivates you as a scholar.*

"How much time do we have in our lives to do something great?"[2] is a question that emerged from the musical *Tick, tick...BOOM*, but has a way of resonating far beyond the world of its creator, the late Jonathan Larson, best known for the hit musical, *RENT*. It is one that has resonated for me in my scholarly career conducted entirely on "the independent track" on which the concept of time is different – no ticking tenure clock, but nonetheless a different sense of ticking, when there is no sense of the career milestones that one was educated in graduate school to expect and work with. While the external motivation of tenure pressure has its own problems (and works best when it is paired with all the support needed from one's tenuring institution, from financial support for research to paid writing sabbaticals) at least it is something. However, it may be that, as a non-tenure stream faculty, your publications simply do not matter to your university in the same way. And if you are not university-affiliated at all, and thus somewhat removed from the culture of academia, with its more informal support and peer pressure (which in itself can be toxic in some cases), where do you look to keep your work going? In other words, when practicing scholarship outside the traditional tenure-stream academic system, who and what,

[1] "Tick, tick...Boom! The Musical Lyrics. The Musical Lyrics, accessed 1 December 2022. https://www.themusicallyrics.com/t/536-tick-tick-boom-the-musical-lyrics.html

[2] "Tick, tick...Boom." (2021) Retrieved from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8721424/

beyond whatever personal network you might have assembled, can provide needed role models and inspiration?

Though the Independent Scholar community that I have found through the National Coalition of Independent Scholars has largely been a supportive one (and in some ways more mutually supportive than academia might have been) there is still the inevitable sense of measuring oneself against one's colleagues, and sometimes feeling a sense of falling short. And it doesn't totally obviate the sense of anomaly, vis-à-vis friends who either "made it" in academia or ended up leaving a scholarly life altogether, in favor of what many consider to be "real life."

So sometimes it can be helpful, as it has been for me, to seek what might on the face of things seem like an unlikely source of inspiration – far outside one's field of scholarship or work, looking into the larger world of creative work. The creative and literary arts provide many examples of those whose seeming overnight success was preceded by years of trial and heartbreak – often additionally beset by the practical aspects of managing a creative career in a socioeconomic environment that is generally not supportive of such endeavors. Author biographies or autobiographies can be helpful, though some, in their retrospective focus, can convey a sense of inevitability, that fails to acknowledge the degree of self-doubt (not to mention actual failures) that take place along the way. Also, since each of these stories is so highly personal, it can take some effort for the inspiration-seeking scholar to find the one that just "fits." For me, it has ended up being an unlikely source – an underrated movie musical, whose composer, Jonathan Larson, is best known not for this, but for his wildly successful and popular musical, *RENT*, and his dying of an undiagnosed heart condition the day of *RENT*'s opening night, thus never living to experience the success towards which he had worked so hard. Curiously, it is only as I have been working on this essay that I finally saw *RENT* (the filmed Broadway production) and saw what all the fuss was about, what a masterwork was this play that won just about every award possible. Yet it is the story of the creative process leading up to the production of *RENT* – the failures, and the massive creative output along the way – that is a story itself worth hearing.[3] It was Larson's other produced musical (off-Broadway), *Tick, tick…BOOM*, however, which began as one-man show during his lifetime, was reworked as a three-actor stage show in the 2000s after his death, and most recently was made into a movie[4] that has really spoken to me as I have worked over the years on one project I long struggled with, and also taken up a new one that I have had confidence in from the beginning.[5] I first became acquainted with this movie musical over a year ago, and the film has since resonated with me, becoming something of a soundtrack/background to my own scholarly work. The film has spoken to me in countless ways throughout, on issues ranging from writers' block to a sense of limited time, to figuring out one's best motivation – and most recently, to finding a larger purpose behind one's work beyond creativity for creativity's sake. In this essay, I will explore some of the themes that spoke the most to me – and may speak to you.

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[3] Beyond *Tick, tick…*, more information is available in the book *BOHO Days*, which chronicles Larson's whole creative career, from college onward demonstrating that it was about so much more than *RENT*, along with the process of this show's creation. J. Collis, *Boho Days: The Wider Works of Jonathan Larson* (2018). Outer Obscurity Publications: v-ix; and M.J. Warren (2008) *RENT: Filmed Live on Broadway*. Radical Media.

[4] The movie starred Andrew Garfield, and was directed by Lin-Manuel Miranda whose own creative trajectory was inspired by Larson's story, and who experienced a similar struggling path to his overnight success with *Hamilton*.

[5] "Lin-Manuel Miranda on How 'Rent' Changed His Life, and Led Him to Direct "Tick, Tick…Boom,'" (2021, 15 November). Retrieved from https://people.com/movies/lin-manuel-miranda-on-how-rent-changed-his-life-and-led-him-to-direct-tick-tickboom/; and J. Collis, v-ix.

A capsule summary of the play will be helpful. It is the semi-autobiographical and semi-fictional story of a week in the life of then aspiring Broadway musical theatre composer Jonathan Larson. He is approaching is thirtieth birthday full of dread of reaching what should be the age of full adulthood, and still living with roommates in a walkup apartment and waiting tables in a nearby diner, with still no produced musical to his name; he is comparing himself with Stephen Sondheim who was twenty-seven when his first musical reached Broadway. He is also dealing with his best friend's decision to leave behind his own theatrical aspirations, take a corporate job, and move out of their flat into a nice, high-rise apartment, as well as pressure from his girlfriend who is ready for a more settled life and wants to know where he will fit in with that. Most of his attention, though, is directed to preparing the musical he has been working on for years to present at a workshop, in hopes of attracting some noteworthy theatre producer. He presents the musical, *Superbia*, a dystopian futuristic fantasy loosely based on the George Orwell novel *1984* to great interest – in what he will write next. Devastated, Larson is ready to quit, but then receives unexpected encouragement from his best friend Michael, who also discloses that he is HIV positive and justifies taking the job he did to enjoy what life he has left. After wandering through Central Park thinking things through, Larson reflects on why he does this and why he wants to continue. He comes home to a phone message of encouragement from Sondheim, both enabling him to face his thirtieth birthday with confidence and continue to write. It is a somewhat anomalously inspiring story of picking up after failure, with a new appreciation for the process itself, and willingness to pick up and write more (Collis, 2018, pp. 322-28).

The movie's tagline, "how much time to do we have to do something great?" can speak to any creative person but is particularly relevant when you reach an age/stage in life when you feel or appear to be past the point where you *should* have accomplished something of significance but have reason to believe that you still haven't. This is a big question for someone whose graduate school promise seemed to have gone unfulfilled. Agewise, I am well past the "30/90" deadline of age 30 for having achieved a certain goal, whether a book manuscript or a play on Broadway, but the feeling behind the song of wishing there was a way to "stop the clock" and "freeze the frame" remains relevant beyond the many ages defined as one's prime. It also raises a serious question of whether you are ever really "too old"?[6] In Larson's case, he was working under the premonition that he was going to die prematurely – a premonition that sadly came true at the age of 35, on the very morning of the opening of *RENT.* So the opening song and scene spoke to a very real fear along with this more general sense of wondering if there really was still time, as well as the sense of hopefully longing and self/doubt that have a way of going side by side, that was also expressed in the semi-autobiographical song "One of These Days" from the never-produced *Superbia.* Yet, perhaps healthily, Larson's concern for having limited time on this earth extended to musing on how we can best give our time, not only to our work, but to family, friends, love, etc. – something that any creative person would do well to think about in the otherwise single-minded pursuit of creative success.[7]

With it is the question of knowing when to quit – whether in terms of an individual project, or your work altogether (and one does not necessarily imply the other). This question is explored in the second scene and song "Decide," where Larson must seriously confront the conflict between his priorities and those of his best friend, Michael, or more of moment, of his "significant other," Susan. For Larson, the dilemma is particularly poignant, as he approaches the workshop that he sees as either making or breaking him and references his real-life eight-year work on his futuristic musical, *Superbia,* that never made it past

[6] See chapter 1.3 on "Late-Blooming Researchers".

[7] Collis, vi-vii, 39-64, 322-328; "One of These Days Lyrics." Retrieved from https://genius.com/Jonathan-larson-one-of-these-days-lyrics; and "30/90 Lyrics," *Tick, Tick…Boom*." Retrieved from https://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/ticktickboom/3090.htm.

the workshop stage. So when "Johnny" poses the question "can he make his mark, if he gives up his spark?" it is not only about this particular work, but about his whole career path and significant ambitions. Essentially, he dreamed of making much more of the American musical at a time when most of what was playing on Broadway was imported (usually British) "spectacle" musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber. This is also referenced in the later rap number "The Play Game," as such productions seemed to be more about commercialism than art.

For many producers of creative work, as for Larson, the sense of being out of sync with the times – either ahead or behind the curve – is not always resolvable, and the question can be how long do you go on trying to resolve it – a thought that I have long wrestled with and something in particular inspiration about from this story. Larson, in real life, offered *Superbia* to just about every theatre in New York, unsuccessfully, which begged the question for me – had I even come close with potential publishers, even as I seemed to keep crossing another off with each rejection. This raises another of the questions of Larson's song "How do you know when it's time to let go?" – a question I would learn to not be afraid to explore in my own workshop experience.[8]

For Larson, this question came to a head during the workshop. Having overcome his writer's block to write the hit song that made the musical what it is, he gets no production offers – just expressions of "I can't wait to see what he does next" – the sentiment that, though devastating, became the impetus for him to abandon the project, and try something different. In his (literal) real life, it meant going on to the creation of his initially one-man musical about trying to write a musical, *Tick, tick… BOOM!* and then his defining oeuvre, RENT (as well as a variety of other work along the way). The dramatized Larson in the meantime receives some cold comfort along the way from his agent with advice that, in his situation, "You start writing the next one. And after you finish that, you start the next one. And on and on, and that's what it is to be a writer, honey." Essentially, "you keep throwing them against the wall and hope against hope that one eventually sticks."[9]

This approach, to be sure, has its limits – sometimes it is necessary to be a little more strategic regarding what you throw against the wall - and which wall – especially in an area of work where "selling out" is less of an issue – and there many known ways to increase the probability of something sticking. Indeed, while it's a good thing not to spread oneself too thin, sometimes it's neither necessary nor desirable to finish one project before starting the next. Left out of this particular dramatic narrative, understandably, is the recognition that, even when you (should) live to see the success you dream of, there is still (ideally) the "what's next" question that is part of the creative life, and that failure may follow success, requiring its own decision making. For example, it's not clear if Larson knew during his lifetime that his own idol and mentor Stephen Sondheim, after the initial failure of *Merrily We Roll Along* was ready to hang it up as musical theatre composer – until he found his new collaborator James Lapine, resulting in the creation of the hit *Sunday in the Park with George*.) And beyond the particularities of the world of musical theater, it can be a challenge to maintain one's "spark" and motivation, given the sometimes brutal competitiveness of just about every creative field.[10]

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[8] Collis., and "Johnny Can't Decide Lyrics, Retrieved from https://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/ticktickboom/johnnycantdecide.htm

[9] Collis, 95-101, 149-191; and Miranda, *Tick, Tick…BOOM!*

[10] "Stephen Sondheim." Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Sondheim; "Sunday lyrics." Retrieved from https://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/sundayintheparkwithgeorge/sunday.htm; "Tick, Tick…Boom—Sunday Lyrics." Retrieved from https://www.themusicallyrics.com/t/536-tick-tick-boom-the-musical-lyrics/7686-sunday-lyrics.html; Collis, 323, 326; and K. Harris, "Sondheim's Influence on TICK, TICK,..BOOM," (2010, 8 April). Retrieved from https://www.mtishows.com/news/sondheims-influence-on-tick-tickboom.

The dilemmas that Larson illustrated also demonstrate how the creative life does not exist in a vacuum, and inevitably involves conflicts within personal relationships, especially when, as the musical illustrates, one's partner is offered an opportunity that they can't pass up, but would require significant sacrifice on one's part, as when Larson's significant other is offered an opportunity to teach dance far away from New York City, where his own work requires him to be.I would dare suggest that this dilemma has also been what has brought some of us into Independent Scholarship, even beyond the leaded age of university anti-nepotism rules. When the opportunities for you compared to those for your partner just aren't there, how much can you do before the dilemma puts an untenable strain on a relationship? Yet none of us can put off deciding for long and, whichever way it goes, there may be regrets. This is best illustrated in the song "Real Life," which addresses the apparently irreconcilable dilemma of pursuing one's dreams versus facing reality – using the character Michael who gives up his acting dream for a well-remunerated job in advertising and the "good life" it brings. In the three-person stage version, it is the art that is the distraction, but the movie version "flips the script" so that Michael, in his cushy office, now wonders what *he* has given up with his acting dreams: he is living the good life his friend is envying, yet also understands that there is a certain emptiness and sterility that comes as its price. It's Michael who poses the question that every creative person should ask of themselves, namely what motivates them: fear or love? Larson's initial response is "Fear, 100 percent." These clashing ideals of what "real life" can present another dilemma for fulfilling one's creative—or scholarly dreams.[11]

So what, you ask, has this had to do with my Independent Scholarly career, and what lessons can it impart? Possibly this musical and movie can speak, among many things, to the issues of writers' block as well as the fear of failure that can get in the way of even trying. For me, it resonated with the many years I spent with my dissertation, and many more transforming it into a book. The process involved a lot of low-level discouragement mixed with measurable success in the early stages. For me, part of it was the initial conditional acceptance of my dissertation prospectus, which my writing coach would later name as a "micro-rejection," and there was no "do-over" when it came to submitting it. There was just the expectation that I would address the problems as I worked on the actual dissertation – something that did not exactly inspire confident forward movement. And in both practical and morale-related terms, my failure to win one of the university-wide dissertation completion fellowships that the department seemed sure I would get added to the sense of not being quite where I was going. Nonetheless, I pushed forward with my project that at the research stage attracted quite a bit of support and even funding. While some took multiple tries, for a time, I seemed to win just about every small research grant possible, with the notable and ironic exception of the Association for Jewish Studies, which I was not connected with at the time, in part for attending what at least then was the only school in the Big Ten without a Jewish Studies department. In hindsight, it is easy to forget the number of fellowship-related lectures I gave, as well as an early journal publication from my research, and a (shared) article prize from the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

But in what is probably the scholarly equivalent of getting a play produced on Broadway – getting a book manuscript accepted to a major academic press would become the ongoing challenge, which stalled after the initial interested expressed by publishers even before the dissertation was completed. Practically speaking, I accomplished the first transformation from dissertation to book (and then a second one) at the macro level far more easily than I would at the micro level. Plus, there was the question of my target audience, moving from primarily a labor history focus on Jewish studies, before considering both, plus Midwestern history/studies. There was one particular publisher that showed great

[11] Ibid.; "Tick, Tick...Boom!" Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tick,_Tick..._Boom!; Collis, vii-viii, 101-104, 322-26; and C. Miller, "Compromise or Persevere?" Larson's *tick, tick...BOOM!* (12 November 2021). Retrieved from https://blogs.loc.gov/music/2021/11/compromise-or-persevere-larsons-tick-tick-boom/?loclr=blogmus

interest, and in many ways strung me along for years, before rejecting me for a second time. Essentially, they wanted me to do a rewrite, but gave me no guidance as to how to go about it. The second rejection, which seemed to have a certain finality, was especially devastating, and for a time turned me away from the project to other things. This was good as a temporary strategy in terms of regrouping, but for the long term, created its own problems when it came to getting "back in the saddle" and seeing how I could improve not only the manuscript, but the proposal.

It would only eventually dawn on me that part of my problem was that I really had no clue as to how to write an effective book proposal – something I have only learned more recently. Partially my frustration was based on what seemed like the mystery of it all: my similarly situated colleagues all seemed to be able to land book contracts, often for the same series at the same press I was trying for. And with each rejection, usually with publishers that seemed "good fits," it became a case of one more publisher crossed off. This begged the question of how many would eventually be left. While on the one hand, I realized that I hadn't approached anything close to the equivalent of the "every theatre in New York" limit, but on the other hand, with each rejection, the possibilities necessarily narrowed. And I would have nothing equivalent to Larson's "real life" experience of a "first right of refusal" in the case of one of his musicals.

Then there was the environment in which I worked (and socialized). I was told by many – from publishers to people who thought they were my friends – that what I was writing was not relevant, was too narrow, and possibly too "out there." Perhaps it was no wonder that I started to wonder if this project was my *Superbia*, when even the publisher who seemed the most interested changed their minds when they actually saw it. Plus, some of these publishers, by the time I was getting ready to approach them, had moved on in their publishing focuses, and the more I learned about the publishing business (including going into Developmental Editing for this very purpose) the more I was both encouraged and discouraged. Part of it came from spending a lot of time with a religious community that was less than supportive, putting me mostly among non-scholars, and more significantly someone whose own failings as an academic scholar caused him to regard me a threat, and to feign just enough interest in my work to effectively disparage it. For a time, I seriously lost confidence, and my non-job talk and non-fellowship-related presentations did not seem to elicit the desired public interest in my original research: at one conference, the only question I received was about a key historical event in this research that I had reason to believe was common knowledge in that particular setting. Nor were commentators very encouraging, at least until recently.

Like Larson, immersed as he was in the world of musical theatre, and having a genuine mentor relationship with Sondheim, I dealt with a good deal of imposter syndrome: potential and promise that was genuinely recognized, but never seemed to be fulfilled. And there have been plenty of opportunities to compare myself to others, especially graduate colleagues who started in the same place, but moved ahead, some of whom are now full professors with multiple books and widespread recognition. Meanwhile, I struggled with worse and worse contingent gigs where I was sometimes lucky to find time to write amid all the work they entailed for the little they paid. It was when I started thinking seriously about looking at alternative forms of remuneration – but only of my own choosing – that I increasingly came to understand the effect of the contingencies of contingency, and its effect on creative output. I would also, more than once, encounter the toxic attitudes of others who had encountered failure and not yet sat with their own sense of failure or inadequacy as I was trying to do. Yet I also sometimes encountered unexpected moments of support, recognition, and respect, even from colleagues who had accomplished what seemed increasingly elusive to me.

Part of the problem was not having much of a scholarly model at first – and being part of a generation of humanities graduates who in some ways fell between the cracks. This generation finished just as tenure-stream jobs were starting to seriously drop off, but too early to benefit from the growing number of humanities postdocs (adapted from what had long been a feature of the STEM disciplines) that both bought time and enhanced career prospects. For that reason, I also gained some welcome insight and perspectives from those classmates who had struggled to continue to engage in scholarship (and produce engaged scholarship) amid largely contingent or academic-adjacent employment and saw in what ways I was not alone (Breitzer, 2016). It was more recently, though, that I would find a more life-changing community of support and workshop opportunities.

It began in the depths of the pandemic when I watched a free writing challenge launched by Sharon Shahaf, an ex-academic turned writing coach and developmental editor, and from there signed up for her Foundational Writing Workshop that she offered as part of her Academic Writers' Unblock! program. There I found ways to move past the writers' block that had contributed to my lack of progress. In the many sources and techniques gleaned from this workshop, I was even able to work in a little inspiration from a mashup of what I had learned in the workshop and a movie-restored scene and number from *Tick, tick...*that had been eliminated from the stage versions. In it, on the day before he is to workshop *Superbia*, Larson finds himself unable to compose a key song for the show. At that time he is also quarreling with his best friend, his girlfriend is about to break up with him, and finally his power is shut off for nonpayment. So in this scene, perhaps with nothing left to do but take a break, he goes swimming and, in the pool, gets the inspiration for what will be the hit song of the musical. He then goes back to his dark, unelectrified apartment and, without the use of a computer, composes the song with pen and paper by candlelight (Miranda, L. 2021). While I have yet to encounter a situation quite that extreme, this movie account of getting out a creative jam speaks to the many moments of adversity I've encountered. I've also learnt when the very adversity one faces might necessitate taking a break – even when it is a less-than-ideal time to do so – that might be exactly what is needed in order to move forward.

The value of the workshop has also continued for me, beyond seeking support, in providing a supportive environment to present and seek feedback for my work. As my financial situation improved, I was able to take an advanced workshop (and now a second) with this writing coach. In this past workshop, among a mix of scholars at different career stages, I allowed myself to ask, when it came my turn to seek feedback: if this were published, would this be something that you would read? The answer of most, fortunately, was yes. I also received encouragement from my writing coach, Sharon, that yes, this is a work in which I should have confidence, that it was not narrow, that it was something that people wanted to read – and that I only needed to be able to make a case for it. Additionally, during the workshop, I learned that part of the process is in fact discerning "how do you know when it's time to let go?" – something that ended up being cogent to a couple of workshop participants in learning that sometimes it is okay to abandon a project, the better to go onto something else that will be more productive, at least at the given time – perhaps the *Superbia* test. Yet, I was also to reassuringly discern that this was not going to be the case for me—at least not at this stage.

Along the way, I came to see how much I had *not* exhausted my publishing possibilities. Unlike Larson, who had brought *Superbia* to pretty much every theatre in New York, I realized that I hadn't come close to the equivalent with possible publishers – even when it sometimes felt like otherwise. And between this workshop and a free one offered through a scholarly organization I am part of, I became aware of the possibility of trying again a certain publisher that seemed like just the right one all along – once I had the proposal and writing sample fully reworked. And as I resumed presenting more recently (e.g., post-dissertation) papers in working groups and (during the 2020 pandemic) online conferences and seminars, the feedback helped move things along. In fact, in one labor history seminar at which I recently presented, I received some Sondheim-like encouragement from a prominent labor historian, and most recently, I have been able to think in terms of the larger social issue this work might address, and have developed a new impetus and motivation of the kind that animated the creation of *RENT* that was partially in response to the AIDS crisis.

So what other lessons can I draw and then impart from my discovery of the work and world of Jonathan Larson? One is the importance of networks and networking, and not just in the job-seeking sense. Larson, during his foreshortened career, did not work in isolation, and neither should any independently practicing creative person, including Independent Scholars. Workshops can be helpful long past graduate school, though with some, affordability may be an issue. Alternatively, or additionally, working groups, if you can manage the time commitment, can also be really helpful. Finally, as members of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (and beyond), it's important to maintain ties with fellow IS's, even though it can be hard to watch others move ahead when you are stalling. It should then be on those who are moving ahead to exercise proper sensitivity to peers who are struggling. Sometimes "accountability buddies" (formal and informal) can be helpful to keeping the process of production moving along, though these should be arranged with care. Beyond colleagues, seeking mentors beyond graduate school, especially those who can offer fresh perspectives on your work, can have immense value to moving forward from a stuck position.[12]

Second, it may be worth the challenge of balancing starting up a new project, even while trying to wrap up the old. As I have gained new confidence with this first project, and considered the possibility that maybe it wasn't my *Superbia* after all, I discovered, in the depths of the pandemic, "the next big thing." In this project I am seeking to draw from personal experience and translate it into a larger issue, taking inspiration from a fellow participant in my latest workshop who is doing the same – the best fulfillment of my practice of "using history to make sense of things." I've been excited about this project to think that it could even be my *RENT* – until I ruefully considered the possibility that this might mean my perishing just as the book is about to come out for publication! But in beginning research for this process, I recently spent some time in New York City, taking new inspiration from the city that nourished Jonathan Larson (that as a bonus, was my first post-pandemic major trip). As a result, this year (and possibly into the next) has become devoted to wrapping up work on one major project, while beginning major work on a new one—with things sometimes going gangbusters and sometimes slowing down. And while these are works are still in project, and I am still facing the prospect of trying again, and facing more rejection, and likely with more than one publisher, I now appreciate the importance of continuing to persist, and knowing when it is not yet time to let go.

In conclusion, I don't want to seem to pollyannaish about this, but beyond inspiration, community, resources, and some sense of stability (economic or otherwise) are necessary for a creative or scholarly life. The starving artist (or scholar) can be romanticizable on paper (and up to a point), but it is understandably human to want some payoff at some point, so it can then become a test of patience and ability to balance scholarship (or creativity) with the practical necessities of life, and furthermore doing so outside of the academic structure that was once designed to support it with its combination of support and accountability. Still, within these limitations, Larson has spoken to me (and perhaps others like me) when he moved from responding to the question of whether he was motivated by fear or love. "Fear. 100 percent," he said, proclaiming "Fear or love, baby, don't say the answer/actions speak louder than words." *Tick, Tick…*has also spoken to me in a way that resonates with what I have learned in my workshops about the importance of enjoying the process as much as the product, and being able, when thinking of the work (at least most of the time) to think "Hey, what a way to spend a day." Interestingly, there have been critics of this semi-autobiographical musical who argued that it was too personal (or too self-indulgent) to speak beyond its time or place: I am one (and not the only one) who

[12] See chapter 3.1 on mentoring.

would beg to differ. And while this narrative may not work for others, in my experience, it shows the possibility of drawing inspiration from a creative work that might be far beyond your area of expertise, but that really speaks to you. What might yours be?

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PART 4

PRACTICAL GUIDES FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

THINKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES: INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Amanda J. Haste (France)

INTRODUCTION

Many Independent Scholars (ISs) find their research crossing disciplines – and indeed being an independent researcher means we have the freedom to extend our research in any way we wish. While we as researchers may define ourselves by our primary discipline, such as that of our postgraduate qualification, our research may well draw on other academic disciplines, such as anthropology, economics, sociology, psychology, philosophy etc. to express several facets of our argument. Indeed, this can be essential to our approach. Warwick University's Dr Nick Monk speaks about Warwick International Higher Education Academy's definition of interdisciplinarity: from a "disciplinary issue" it becomes a "problem-based issue" (Warwick/Nick Monk, n.d.).

> "Often, interdisciplinarity is applied in cases where traditional disciplines are unable to address the problem, such as women's studies or sustainability. It can likewise be applied to complex subjects that can only be understood by combining the perspectives of two or more fields." (Warwick, "Interdisciplinarity," n.d.).

Such crossing of disciplinary boundaries has variously been termed multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, so it would be useful to provide some accepted definitions for each of these, as defined by Choi and Pak (2006, p. 351):

Multidisciplinarity draws on knowledge from different disciplines but stays within their boundaries.

Interdisciplinarity analyzes, synthesizes and harmonizes links between disciplines into a coordinated and coherent whole.

Transdisciplinarity integrates the natural, social and health sciences in a humanities context, and transcends their traditional boundaries.

However, these terms "are ambiguously defined and interchangeably used" (Choi and Pak, 2006, p. 351) and indeed the authors of *Foundations of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research: A Reader* (Vienni-Baptista et al., 2023) choose to use both terms. In the context of this chapter I will therefore be using "interdisciplinarity" to mean a researcher using more than one discipline to provide different perspectives on the research question in hand.

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach allows us to examine the "problem" from different angles and perspectives, so providing a more rounded approach. However, it also raises certain issues, particularly for the independent researcher. Speaking personally, I started out with a PhD in musicology, but virtually every strand of my research has led to my delving into unrelated disciplines. Even within my monograph on twenty-first-century monastic music (Haste, 2023) the various chapters have respectively relied heavily on the literature in gender studies, identity studies, aesthetics, and marketing and commodification. To be honest, I can't see how I could possibly have explored the issues implicit in the music I was discussing without recourse to these other fields.

HOW TO DO IT

Of the many online resources available, I've chosen to cite the website Affordable Dissertation UK which offers practical step-by-step advice on how to carry out interdisciplinary research:

Identify the problem or question you want to investigate: This can be anything from understanding how climate change affects plant growth to predicting how terrorist attacks will affect markets.

Consult your colleagues in other fields: They can offer insights and information that you may have yet to consider. For example, meteorologists can provide insight into how weather affects plant growth.

Take advantage of resources available online. Many databases and search engines can help you find the information you need.

Construct a hypothesis based on the information you've gathered. It is your best guess for what is happening or why something happened.

Test your hypothesis using various methods and data sources. If correct, you can confirm your theory and move on to the next step. If it's wrong, you'll need to revise it accordingly.

Refine your theory until it's accurate and reliable. This process may require additional research or testing, but it's essential for yielding meaningful results.

Publish your findings in a journal or other publication mediums if they meet standards of quality and accuracy. It will help disseminate your work to the scientific community and inspire further research.

PROS AND CONS

For those of us who have already engaged in interdisciplinary research, it is undoubtedly very rewarding both for our research and on a personal level. It involves a satisfyingly holistic and collaborative approach, making new contacts with researchers in other disciplines. The resulting cross-fertilisation of ideas can not only inform our own research but enrich others – many is the time I've heard "Oh, I'd never thought of it like that!" Interdisciplinary research is thus often more effective and leads to fresh insights; it is also a more creative way of working. However, crossing disciplinary boundaries can also have its drawbacks.

While most of us have pursued our postgraduate studies by focusing on one narrow discipline, as independent researchers we are also likely to have had personal experience in other areas, and we may well be using this to inspire and inform our research. This may be practice-led, publishing papers based on issues arising from our own professional experience, such as introducing an innovative element to our teaching practice (see Dixon, 2021; Haste, 2021). Alternatively, it may be born of lived experience such as trauma, the research serving to analyse and comprehend the causes and consequences (see Shadrack, 2020). These will often take us out of our comfort zone as we explore new disciplinary fields that may be far from our starting point.

Mining new fields

Taking our research beyond our specialism means familiarising ourselves with a whole new field of literature, and especially ensuring that our accepted understanding of certain terms has the same meaning in the new discipline. For example, "land use" may have different connotations depending on whether it is being viewed from the disciplines of politics, economics, biology, chemistry or geography.

Networking

Affordable Dissertation UK happily advises consulting colleagues, but for the independent researcher without a faculty network this will take a little more effort than simply emailing someone on the staff list of your university or catching up with them on campus. Making connections with other researchers outside our fields will therefore require using keywords to trawl the literature, identifying authors whose names come up frequently, and tracking them down. Be sure to make your initial contact concise, setting out your interest in their work and where you think it will fit in with your own, and briefly citing your own research credentials (publications in the field etc.). Most researchers are delighted when someone shows an interest in their work, and will often be generous in sending you preprints, pointing you in new directions or suggesting other scholars who can help you.

New methodologies

Methodological frameworks may also differ between disciplines, making it awkward to situate your research. This can also lead to issues with evaluation: peer reviewers may well be drawn from each of the main disciplines used in your research paper, and these may be unhappy with the way your research is presented as it goes against the expectations of their own discipline. For this reason, it is advisable to acquaint yourself with the accepted theoretical and methodical frameworks of each discipline and to explain in your abstract/introduction your reasons for choosing (or rejecting) a particular framework. You should also present the interdisciplinary nature of your work in such a way as to emphasize the material benefits of such an approach.

Researcher identity

I would also like to broach the issue of researcher identity. If our research is interdisciplinary, how do we present ourselves, without appearing to be so profligate in our use of disciplines that we cannot claim our place in the research landscape? My own experience may serve as an example here as, like many of us, I have published across several fields. A former professional musician with a PhD in musicology, I am now a freelance translator, and my research reflects my life in both music and language. I therefore describe myself as "a musicologist whose research focuses on identity construction through music and language" which establishes my academic and professional credentials and validates the breadth of my research. The way you present yourself will of course vary slightly depending on the type of research in which you are engaged, much as you would adjust your CV for a particular job application.

Presenting our work

Having thus situated ourselves as having a valid claim to be conducting this interdisciplinary research, to whom do we present our work? Clearly, we risk falling between two stools by approaching discipline-specific journals – how often do we hear that our research is "beyond the scope of this journal"? Journal editors may also experience difficulty in sourcing reviewers, as those in one discipline will often say they don't have enough expertise in the other discipline(s) involved and thus don't feel equipped to carry out the review.

Evidently, a careful reading of the journal's aims and scope are essential here. If they are open to innovative approaches to their discipline, there is hope. Ask yourself about the importance of the interdisciplinary aspect. Is it substantial, or tangential? Would you be better targeting a more interdisciplinary publication? (If so, a word of warning – if they have an impossibly wide-ranging title, such as the Journal of Humanities, Engineering and Science, they are unlikely to be a worthy vehicle for your research!).

Wendy Belcher provides a comprehensive introduction to interdisciplinary journals which are scholarly and peer-reviewed but have also "been keeping pace with the explosion of interdisciplinary work". These "may either pair two disciplines (e.g. *Philosophy and Literature*) or don't fit directly in any one discipline (e.g. *Human Rights Quarterly*)." However, as Belcher says, you need to carefully assess an interdisciplinary journal "to see whether your brand of interdisciplinary work would fit there" and may "need to beef up your orientation toward one of the disciplines to make your article truly interdisciplinary" as opposed to just making fleeting references to the other discipline(s) (Belcher, p. 123). She also makes the point that such journals may not carry the same weight as more established single-discipline journals in terms of academic career trajectory, though this is generally of less concern to Independent Scholars.

CONCLUSION

This brief overview has shown that interdisciplinary research, which draws knowledge from several fields, is about creating something new by thinking across boundaries. As such, it is a 'real world' approach in that academic disciplines create artificial boundaries in a way that the real (organic, holistic) world does not. Such interdisciplinarity has also led to the creation of new disciplines such as linguistic anthropology, evolutionary economics, and semioethics, thus leading to an ever-richer research environment for all of us.

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ETHICS FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS

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INTRODUCTION

Although 'research ethics' is a well-known and frequently used term, it has no agreed definition. Rather, it refers to a diverse set of theories and practices. Ethical theories include deontology (acts are good or bad in themselves regardless of the consequences), consequentialism (an ethical outcome is more important than whether the act that led to that outcome is good or bad), virtue ethics (good people are ethical) and value-based ethics (an agreed value base is necessary for ethical actions). Each of these theories offers a potentially useful perspective, but none is sufficiently explanatory on its own because each can also be debunked by taking context into account. For deontology, let us take the example of person A pushing a knife into the stomach of person B. If person A is angry with person B, and pushes the knife in as an expression of their anger, that is unethical. However, if person A is a surgeon in an operating theatre, and person B is about to undergo potentially life-saving surgery, then person A pushing the knife in is entirely ethical. For consequentialism, we know parts of the world are highly overpopulated. Culling, say, everyone over 50, would undoubtedly lead to a reduction in overpopulation – an ethical outcome – but could not possibly be considered an ethical act. Good people sometimes do harmful things, and evil-doers can also show kindness, which puts paid to virtue ethics. And value-based ethics only works if consensus can be achieved.

Ethical practices also vary between different academic disciplines. For example, many medical researchers and psychologists are in favour of paying research participants, while many lawyers and anthropologists are not (Colvin, 2014; Back, 2015). Both sides claim ethical reasons for their position. Those in favour of paying participants say research is a professional activity, often funded by wealthy organisations, so participants should have as much right to be paid for their contribution as researchers and others. Those not in favour say payments can make life difficult for researchers who don't have a budget, could change the relationship between researcher and researched, and may adversely affect the quality of data gathered.

This is a useful illustration of the way ethics can be – quite legitimately – claimed as a basis for opposing views. It also helps us to begin to understand why ethics is so important in research. Research is a complex human activity within which it can be difficult – sometimes impossible – to fully meet the needs of everyone involved. Yet it is essential to try to get as close to that ideal as we can.

UNETHICAL RESEARCH

Cautionary tales of unethical research, used in research ethics teaching, usually include work such as the Nazi experiments on humans in Europe in the second world war, or the Tuskegee study of untreated syphilis in black men in America in the mid-20th century. These are clear and useful examples of unethical research, but teaching this way also carries the implicit message that unethical research is a thing of the past. Sadly, this is far from being the case. Some examples of unethical research practices in use today include refusal to relinquish control of human remains, ethics dumping, and coercive census research.

Human remains are held by organisations such as museums and universities around the world. These were often unethically acquired through mechanisms such as colonisation, genocide, and grave-robbing. These remains are treated by the organisations concerned as 'property rather than people' (Stantis et al 2023). Their descendants, however, often see them as people, and want them reunited with their communities. Some small progress has been made in repatriating human remains to their communities of origin, but there is still a great deal of work to do. Human remains are not simply a resource for researchers and, as yet, there are no professional ethical standards that set out what it means to treat dead people and their live descendants with respect and care (ibid).

Ethics dumping refers to the practice of conducting research in lower income countries, where research ethics governance is weak or non-existent, when the proposed research would not – or did not – receive ethical approval in a higher income country. This might involve the abuse of individuals, communities, rights or finance (Teixeira da Silva 2022). This research is sometimes published in high-impact academic journals, which can boost the career of its author(s), and may go on to be cited by others who have no idea about its unethical conduct. Meanwhile, its participants may have been the victims of theft, broken promises, financial or moral injury, and/or other forms of damage.

Some national governments carry out census research at regular intervals, usually every ten years. In some countries, such as the UK and Australia, it is compulsory for everyone to participate in census research and there are penalties for non-compliance (Kara 2018). This contravenes the research ethics principle of informed consent. Every Euro-Western researcher is taught that coercion is unethical and that potential participants must be free to agree or refuse to take part in research. Yet some national governments coerce their populations into taking part in census research, completely ignoring one of the ethical principles which, no doubt, they require researchers they fund to adhere to.

One useful resource for gauging the extent and nature of unethical research in the world today is Retraction Watch, a US non-profit which tracks retracted academic journal articles – and their citations. A retraction may happen some years after publication, as a result of someone raising questions about an article. Also, retractions are not usually well publicised, and retracted articles are often still available through resources such as Google Scholar, so researchers may end up unwittingly citing retracted work.

Of course not all retractions are made for unethical reasons. Some researchers make honest mistakes. But Retraction Watch's list of reasons for retractions makes for jaw-dropping reading. It includes: plagiarism; self-plagiarism; fabrication, manipulation or falsification of data, images or results; misconduct; forgery; fraud; and criminal proceedings. And if you search the Retraction Watch database, using any of these terms, you will find dozens, hundreds, even thousands of examples from all around the world, right up to the present day.

RESEARCH ETHICS GOVERNANCE

In parts of the world there is a system of research governance which is ostensibly intended to prevent unethical research. Evidently it is not working very well. There are pockets of good practice, but in general the system is problematic.

Part of the reason for this is that research governance, in practice, gets confused with institutional protection. Research governance is implemented by groups of people known as research ethics committees or institutional review boards (RECs/IRBs). These groups have the power to grant or withhold ethical approval of a research project. In an ideal world, these groups would exist to help researchers do their work more ethically. In the world we actually live in, they exist primarily to protect research participants and research data, so that the institution a group represents is less likely to be on the receiving end of litigation from a dissatisfied stakeholder.

The system of research governance is top-down, inscrutable, secretive and unaccountable (Kara 2018). The decisions of different RECs/IRBs are often inconsistent (Vadeboncoeur et al 2016). RECs/IRBs can struggle with applications that propose methods with which the group's members are unfamiliar (Howell et al 2014; Aldridge 2024). This can lead to researchers having to limit their choices of methods (Dingwall 2016) or even give up their research plans completely.

Caroline Aldridge is an experienced social worker, an educator, an author/activist, and a bereaved mother whose son died as a result of his mental illness. She has worked extensively with traumatised people in the course of her career. Aldridge planned doctoral research into how parents who are bereaved as a result of their child's mental illness experienced professional and organisational responses to, and investigations of, the death of their child. She gathered a group of bereaved parents on Facebook and worked with them to co-produce a trauma-sensitive research design based on participatory textile arts methods. After a year of careful planning and preparation, the REC rejected her ethics application. They were not happy with her using Facebook as a platform for her research, and suggested she use Padlet instead to facilitate anonymity. The REC also requested more conventional, restrictive methods. To Aldridge, the changes suggested by the REC did not feel ethical, because implementing them would have required her to sideline the group of people who had worked with her to co-produce the research design. For Aldridge, the ethical way forward was to continue to centre these people and their (and her) lived experience – but she didn't have formal approval to take that route. In the end she put her doctoral studies on hold indefinitely (Aldridge 2024).

This is just one example. I have also, anecdotally, heard some very different examples that demonstrate flexibility, understanding, and support for researchers and ethical research. Nevertheless, Aldridge's experience shows that RECs/IRBs can be inflexible and obstructive to researchers – perhaps particularly junior researchers. I have also heard anecdotally that professors get a much easier ride from many RECs/IRBs than doctoral students, though that doesn't seem exactly ethical either.

Also, the existing system of research ethics governance is partial, covering only academic and health research. Considerable and increasing work is being done outside academic and health institutions to support ethical research. Examples include the Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (the world's first independent REC, established over 10 years ago as the New Zealand Ethics Committee to support community-based researchers). Community-generated ethical codes are appearing in various countries, such as the SAN code of ethics (2017) from southern Africa and those in British Columbia, Canada (Johnson/Musayett 2018). Ethical guidelines are published by non-academic research organisations, associations, and societies around the world. There is another series of ethical guidelines for doing research with Indigenous peoples, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020), the Māori research ethics code Te Ara Tika (2010), and those from Indigenous peoples across Canada (Hayward et al 2021). Then there is the EC-funded PRO-RES project which worked from 2018–2021 to develop ethical guidance for non-medical research and policymakers. This is not an exhaustive list.

So, overall, research ethics governance does not do a good job of ensuring that research is ethical. Although this is a regulatory system, the power of RECs/IRBs to make researchers work ethically is severely limited (Johnson/Musayett 2018). On the plus side, independent researchers rarely need to tangle with RECs/IRBs. Yet we know that research ethics are important. So what can we do to ensure our own research is ethical? I suggest there are two key steps we can take. First, consider what we can learn from the holistic ethical approach of Indigenous researchers, and second, consider how we can think and act ethically throughout our research practice.

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH ETHICS

I should clarify, first, that I am a student of Indigenous research practices, not an expert, as I am not an Indigenous researcher myself. And second, that by 'Indigenous' I mean the native populations of settler-colonised countries. Indigenous research is a separate paradigm from Euro-Western research, which it predates by tens of thousands of years.

Indigenous peoples generally privilege oral communication and do not use writing, though in recent years some Indigenous researchers have begun to write about their methods and ethics. I have been following this literature and it seems that Indigenous researchers around the world take a similar approach to ethics. Four fundamental and interlinked principles form the basis of most Indigenous ethical research practice (Wilson and Wilson 2013; Chilisa 2020). These are: relational accountability, communality of knowledge, reciprocity, and benefit sharing.

Relational accountability acknowledges that 'research happens in relationships' (Potts and Brown 2015:33). These relationships are not only with other people, but may also be with, for example, deceased ancestors, the land, animals, the cosmos, the research itself, ideas, and dreams (Chilisa 2020). Not all Indigenous peoples have the same views of this. For example, the Māori people of New Zealand have different beliefs about dreams from the Plains Cree people of Canada (Kovach 2009). Nevertheless, the relational approach is common, and accountability stems from this, with researchers regarded as accountable to all who are in relationship with them and with their research.

It seems to be generally accepted in Indigenous research that researchers will have relationships with research participants that were established long before the research takes place and will continue long after the research is done (Kovach 2009). The quality of existing relationships is viewed as more important than any research. So a researcher who is working in accordance with the principle of relational accountability needs to ask themselves how their research work will help to maintain and develop the relationships on which that research is built (Wilson 2008).

Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001), cited by Chilisa (2020:106), suggests that researchers working with relational accountability should consider questions such as:

1. Which research methods can be used that would help to build respectful relationships between the topic of study and the researcher?
2. Which research methods can be used that would help to build respectful relationships between the researcher and the research participants?
3. How can the researcher relate respectfully with participants so they can form strong relationships together?
4. To what extent is the researcher responsibly fulfilling their role and obligations to the participants, the topic, and all of the Indigenous relations?

If the answers to these questions suggest that proposed research will not at least maintain, and ideally develop, existing relationships, that research is viewed as not worth doing.

Communality of knowledge recognises that everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute to research. Chilisa says: "Knowers are seen as beings with connections to other beings, the spirits of the ancestors, and the world around them that inform what they know and how they can know it." (2020:105) There are some parallels to this in Euro-Western research, such as critical communicative methodology in which everyone's expertise is valued (Munté et al 2011). However, the communality aspect is different: knowledge generated from research is understood as belonging to everyone. In the Euro-Western tradition we have our individualist concepts of intellectual property and copyright laws.

But for most Indigenous researchers, knowledge cannot be owned, because it is part of the relationships between people (Wilson 2008) – and not only people, but also ancestors, the land, ideas; effectively everything (Chilisa 2020). So, for Indigenous researchers, knowledge grows from relationships (Srigley and Varley 2018) and the process of seeking knowledge through research involves renewing relationships (Garcia et al 2019). Also, researchers are in a relationship with, and accountable to, knowledge itself (McGregor 2018).

Reciprocity means that relationships and exchanges should be mutual. For many Indigenous researchers, this is an obligation that comes with relationships (Sherwood 2013). As always in the Indigenous paradigm, these relationships are not limited to those between people but include, for example, relationships between people and the environment. Within these relationships, reciprocity means people never taking more than they need from the environment for nourishment, shelter, entertainment, medication, clothing and so on, and giving back care and respect to the environment in return (Johnson 2013).

Benefit sharing means that participants and their communities should benefit from research at least as much as researchers do. Giving back to participants and communities is a central principle of Indigenous research methods (Lambert 2014). This should be done in a way that is accessible for and useful to participants and communities. That means the researcher needs to be in a relationship with those communities and participants so they can find out what will work for them (Kovach 2009).

We can see that all of these principles of Indigenous research ethics – relational accountability, communality of knowledge, reciprocity, and benefit sharing – are interlinked. This is a holistic ethical approach which recognises research as a key element of relationship-building, community-building, and social change, rather than something that exists within time-limited projects (Potts and Brown 2015). However, although the literature is clear that these common principles exist, that doesn't mean all Indigenous people think or act in the same way. Even within a single community or tribe there may be disagreements or factions (Rodriguez-Lonebear 2016).

Care for the land, the environment and the natural world, people and communities, is the key focus of Indigenous ethics (Wilson and Wilson 2013). Unlike most Euro-Western researchers, the Indigenous literature suggests that Indigenous researchers do not differentiate between ethics for individuals or communities, work or leisure, regarding the same ethical principles as applicable throughout (Kouritzin and Nakagawa 2018). Though of course individual Indigenous researchers and scholars have, and make, choices about how ethical they want to be, just as Euro-Western researchers do.

The Indigenous approach does not ignore power issues. It recognises that within a relationship of unequal power, ethical safety is more likely to be achieved by developing interdependence and trust (Gray et al 2017). However, Euro-Western researchers have countered this with findings such as that reciprocity can have negative, perhaps even dangerous, results if attempted within a relationship of unequal power (Israel 2015). I am not suggesting that one position is 'right' and the other is 'wrong': the key point is that the contexts are different. In practice, this means that while Euro-Western researchers can learn from Indigenous principles, those principles cannot necessarily be transferred wholesale to Euro-Western research contexts.

Nevertheless, I believe it can be useful for Euro-Western researchers to reflect on this very different approach to research ethics as we plan and carry out our own research. Research ethics regulation does not reliably result in ethical research, but it seems to me that research ethics education has a better chance. And this includes educating ourselves.

THINKING AND ACTING ETHICALLY

We need to learn to think and act ethically throughout the research process. This is a complex and ongoing task, not least because our ideas of what is ethical change as societies change. I am old enough to remember when the television was populated by white men who made jokes grounded in racism, sexism, and homophobia. I would not claim that the media is now unbiased, but at least we have a lot more diversity and much less overt discrimination. This is a change I view as positive, though I am sure there are people – white people – who disagree. This is just one example; there are countless others.

Another reason for the complexity of this task is that every research project is different. Even if you are working to replicate someone else's research, the context will be different, you are different from the original researcher, and these differences mean you may come up against ethical difficulties that the previous researcher did not encounter.

Here are some of the topics and questions we need to consider as we work through our research.

When we think of a possible research question, we immediately need to ask ourselves whether that question is ethical. Is the investigation needed? Could the research lead to social, environmental, or other improvements? Are there people with different agendas who could misuse our results? We might also want to use the Indigenous approach as a lens to help us consider how the research might enhance – or damage – existing relationships.

As we plan research, we need to think through, as best we can, the potential ethical pitfalls and dilemmas we may face at each stage of the project. Of course we won't be able to think of everything; unforeseeable circumstances can arise at any time. But it is worth doing all we can to spot, and prepare to mitigate, any ethical difficulties that may occur. In this context, it is also important to think of our own wellbeing. How can we avoid getting overloaded? How can we ensure our own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing in our research work? How can we make sure our research commitments and relationships do not impair our other commitments and relationships?

If there is any kind of cross-cultural element to our work, we need to learn cultural humility. Some years ago, cultural sensitivity was recommended, i.e. being sensitive to the existence of other cultures and to the differences between other cultures and our own. Then the concept of cultural competence developed, which meant understanding the beliefs, values, and customs of different cultures. However, over time, we began to realise that although this was well-intentioned, it risked stigmatising and stereotyping different cultures, and so made room for racism (Lekas et al 2020). Also, competence implies mastery, and so can serve to reinforce existing imbalances of power. Cultural humility involves accepting that: all cultures are valuable; someone from one culture may never fully be able to understand another culture; and we can all learn from each other (Lekas et al 2020).

Research always needs to be set into context, whether through an academic literature review or a more applied approach such as a document analysis and some appropriate statistics. The point of this is to locate the research within relevant wider conversations (Kara 2018). When we are contextualising our research, we need to think about the information we are using to construct that context. Where are we finding our information? How confident are we of its quality? What might we be excluding, and what are the implications of that? Are we able to familiarise ourselves with the information we find well enough to be sure we are using it appropriately? Are we citing other people's work accurately?

At the data gathering stage, Euro-Western researchers are familiar with a handful of ethical issues related to participant wellbeing such as anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. However, although participant wellbeing is undoubtedly important, there are a number of other issues that also merit consideration.

Much Euro-Western research assumes that the only relationship between researchers and participants is through the research itself (Ellis 2007). Again, the Indigenous lens can be useful here, as can the work of feminist researchers who have argued against the prevailing Euro-Western orthodoxy that researchers should 'build rapport' with participants to put them at ease. This has been described as 'faking friendship' (Duncombe and Jessop 2012). In other words, Euro-Western teaching encourages researchers to use our friendship skills as an instrument to get data out of people without offering anything in return. Looked at through the Indigenous lens, this does not seem ethical at all.

Enforcing anonymity may also be unethical if it is against participants' wishes, or has the potential to retraumatise people who have been forcibly renamed by an oppressive regime (Gerver 2013). The wellbeing of people other than participants, such as gatekeepers and other stakeholders, may need attention at this phase of the research process. And it may be necessary to recompense participants, and perhaps also others, for the time and effort they contribute to the research. This does not necessarily mean paying them in money, though it can; after all, most researchers get paid. We used to expect people to take part in research out of the goodness of their hearts to benefit some imagined future population. Now it is becoming clearer that, in the Euro-Western paradigm, research is a professional endeavour, and those who contribute should be rewarded for their input.

Consent is usually treated by Euro-Western researchers as an event, but to be truly ethical, it should generally be seen as a process. This is implicit in the notion that participants can withdraw themselves and/or their data from the research if they wish, though that approach comes with some problems. First, participants need a date after which withdrawal is no longer possible, because once you have begun analysing data withdrawal becomes more difficult, and when findings have been published it is pretty much impossible. Second, participants need to understand that yes, they can withdraw themselves and/or their data, but they cannot erase their impact on the researcher, and the ways their encounter may have changed the researcher's thinking. And third, some forms of participation are discrete and so comparatively easy to remove, while others are more complex. If a focus group participant wants to withdraw their data, do you delete only their words? Or also responses to their statements or questions? Or should you delete the whole focus group transcript?

Data needs to be securely stored, accurately inputted where inputting is necessary, carefully prepared for analysis, and coded thoroughly and accurately. Data should not be manipulated, falsified, or fabricated. Collaborative working can help to ensure that analytic work is ethical (Kara 2018). So can reflexive thinking. This is unusual in being a technique valued by both Indigenous and Euro-Western researchers. It requires 'the examination of both the structural and personal conditions which help us understand the knowledge we create' (Dean 2017:10–11). In practice, this means thinking about how we affect our research, how our research affects us, and what external factors influence these phenomena. Reflexive thinking is not easy, and can be quite uncomfortable (Mannay 2016), but it is also a very useful way of thinking more deeply about our data and our research.

Research is usually reported in writing and sometimes through other media e.g. video, podcasts, animations, or comics. Research may be presented in person or online, and can be disseminated in a range of ways, including through the mainstream media. With all of these communication systems, the key ethical points are to figure out who our audience(s) are likely to be and how we can meet their needs. What do they need to know from our research? How best can we communicate that to them? Another key point for ethical research communication is to ensure that participants understand how they will be represented, and to whom (Pickering and Kara 2017).

Aftercare has always been a consideration in Indigenous research and is beginning to be a consideration in Euro-Western research. There is no clear end point for a research project. The end point could be defined as when the budget has all been spent, or when the last output has been published, or when all the people involved have moved on to other things. But really the research lives on, and has implications, so researchers need to remain accountable. Aftercare may be required for participants, data, findings, and/or researchers ourselves (Kara 2018). And if aftercare is needed, providing that aftercare is an ethical imperative.

CONCLUSION

In our work, researchers will inevitably encounter ethical dilemmas, trilemmas, and quadrilemmas. The more we learn and understand about research ethics, and ethics in general, the better we will be equipped to manage these situations.

Good communication is often key to effective research ethics management. Again here Euro-Western researchers can learn from Indigenous colleagues. Deborah McGregor (2018) puts forward the concept of 'ethical space', in part as a way to trouble the binary between Indigenous and Euro-Western research. For McGregor, the ethical space is a place for discussion, reflection, and change, to help us manage both the ever-changing context for research and the ongoing tensions between groups in society. I had this concept in mind as I wrote this chapter, with the aim of inhabiting and contributing to the ethical space. I thank you for joining me in this deliberative environment.

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DATA, METHODS, AND SOFTWARE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

Independent scholars face a litany of obstacles in conducting research. Conversely, scholars affiliated with universities and other research-based institutions often have a wide breadth of access to data sources, personnel, and institutional support. However, current technologies and methods create opportunities for Independent Scholars in the 21st century to conduct meaningful research outside of the infrastructures, which support more traditional academics. In this chapter I therefore explore the data, methods, and software available to unaffiliated and Independent Scholars to conduct social science research. For data, discussions on how to identify publicly available and easily accessible data for both qualitative and quantitative research are presented. For methods, a brief discussion is made on methodological limitations of research. Finally, a discussion of both qualitative and quantitative software programs and packages available to Independent Scholars is made. Concluding thoughts explore data and methods opportunities for future Independent Scholarship in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Independent scholarship, in its empirical practice within the social sciences, is a process that requires at a minimum three components: time, financial support, and data, without which the potential of providing empirical results to explore social phenomena is greatly hindered. One unfortunate reality of independent research is the lack of institutional support common to most tenure-track faculty, including but not limited to, time and funding (see Orlans, 2002). The scarcity of time and financial resources greatly impacts the type of data available to Independent Scholars. Further complicating data collection needs is that research, especially with human test subjects, requires ethical approval, often (and particularly in the USA), in the form of internal review boards (IRBs). Moreover, and rightfully so, peer-reviewed journals require human test subject data to have been conducted with ethical approval. The problem this presents for Independent Scholars is that those not affiliated with a university, or an IRB-granting institution have more difficulties gathering certain types of primary data. To date, I am not aware of any Independent Scholars' organizations offer an IRB that can review Independent Scholars' work and allow primary data collection from human test subject research, although some options are emerging outside of the US context, such as the work of the Women in Academic Support Network (WIASN) (2023) and their commitment to ensuring participant privacy as per the regulations of the European Union.[1]

[1] It is important to note that other countries' ethical approval processes differ: see Chapter 4.2. on "Ethics in

As a result, Independent Scholars often have to rely on secondary data or primary data that does not require IRB approvals to conduct their empirical research. In the case of secondary data, paywalls present accessibility issues for Independent Scholars. For example, the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) based in the University of Michigan, in the United States, offers a wide range of datasets and even contains datasets that are publicly available. However, major datasets are protected behind a paywall that requires individual membership or university membership (see Institute for Social Research, 2023). Similarly, databases such as Proquest, Nexis Uni, and EBSCO provide databases for qualitative research, such as newspaper databases, yet as with ICPSR, such data often requires payments to access.

One way to avoid the issues around secondary data is to collect data that are publicly available and do not require IRB approval. To this end, projects leveraging documents or complying data from open-sourced locations provide opportunities for Independent Scholars to advance research agendas without the need of IRB approval to conduct human subject research. Even with such options, Independent Scholars are limited in the amount of resources available to conduct research. In both quantitative and qualitative research, the process of leveraging particular research methods is prohibitively expensive. For example, research employing methods such as random control trials, quasi-experimental designs, or even basic surveys require thousands of dollars to be conducted correctly. Qualitative research faces a similar issue with in-person focus group discussions and conducting key informant interviews, presenting high costs for researchers when these need to be conducted in person.

An additional expense of research is often the research software needed for analysis. For quantitative research, although there is free software available - such as R and PSPP - to conduct statistical analysis, the majority of well-known software, with some of the most popular being Stata, SPSS, SAS, Minitab, and JMP - require annual subscriptions. Similarly, for qualitative research, there exists free software for coding transcripts and documents – Aquad, Cassandre, Clan, Taguette, and QualCoder – yet commonly used software requires annual subscriptions: MAXQDA, Atlas.ti, NVIVO, Dedoose, and Quirkos. Thus, even when addressing data analysis issues, most of the software available to researchers requires a financial outlay. It is important to note that there exist organizations that regularly conduct reviews of research software, which would be valuable to review in future years. For qualitative software such work has been conducted by the University of Surrey through their Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) Networking Project. Moreover, for quantitative software such work has been done in other online publications (see Crossman, 2019). Thus, the discourse around research software is robust and everchanging.

Universities often have subscriptions to both datasets and certain types of research software. Moreover, researchers with such institutional access also have the ability to leverage the support of on-campus research centers, institutes, and departments. Organizations within the university setting provide university-affiliated faculty and researchers opportunities to learn new methods, practice with new software, and obtain support on research questions. Such support does not account for other potential assistance that university-affiliated faculty and researchers have from their organizations. For example, university-affiliated faculty and research staff could have access to professional development funds to support learning new research skills.

The resulting high costs of data acquisition, software tools, and certain research methods present clear obstacles for independent researchers to conduct meaningful empirical research. The presence of such barriers has often resulted in past Independent Scholars espousing a process of focusing on non-empirical research (Feyerabend, 1975; Gross, 1984). The need for such critiques on empiricism are valid

Research" for a more global perspective.

since an over-emphasis on empirical research just for the sake of empirical research is a highly problematic stance. However, there is also a need for empirical research to be conducted by Independent Scholars, since limiting research design to non-empirical research hinders the ability to conduct research that can expand the knowledge base for certain research agendas.

In this chapter I therefore focus on the data, methods, and software available to independent researchers wanting to conduct empirical research. In particular, I highlight some of the most recent developments in this century regarding data collection and analysis. The subsequent sections of the chapter contain two sections: qualitative research and quantitative research, in which I discuss the various data, methods, and software available to conduct such research.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research holds the distinct position of being viewed as a "low-cost" research design, as it often requires fewer participants (Steele & Hazleton, 1991). However, qualitative research is often time-consuming (Shakouri & Nazari, 2014), given the vast amount of time required to process and code the data. Such timing losses are a major challenge for independent researchers due to competing family and professional responsibilities. One also needs to consider the medium through which qualitative research is being conducted, because before the data are analyzed one must define the data type itself. The following discussion in this section therefore explores the data, methods, and software available to independent researchers that use a qualitative research design as part of their research agenda.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data to explore social phenomena exist in a myriad of forms: interviews and focus group transcripts, ethnography notes, documents, images, photos, videos, and social media posts. All these media present various ways through which the social world can be examined. However, each data type presents unique advantages and disadvantages for Independent Scholars. As previously mentioned, certain data types are expensive to obtain and manage, and such costs are often the primary barrier faced by Independent Scholars engaged in qualitative research.

One means of cost reduction for interview and focus group discussions is to leverage digital means of connecting with research participants. Given the recent advances in telecommunication technologies interviews and focus group discussions can now be conducted virtually: Zoom (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Oliffe et al., 2021; Wahl-Jorgensen 2021; Santhosh et al., 2021), Google Meets (Abdul Rashid et al., 2020; Santhosh et al., 2021), and Microsoft Teams (Santhosh et al., 2021). Even prior to the pandemic, ethnographic research has long been viewed as being capable of existing in a virtual setting (see Circhton & Kinash, 2003; Domínguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2000, 2008, 2017). Moreover, data types such as documents, images, photos, videos, and social media posts can all be obtained through virtual interactions.

Another means of qualitative data greatly available to Independent Scholars unable to collect primary data due to IRB, cost, or time issues is the use of secondary qualitative data. Such secondary data consist of documents collections, archives, and re-using data from previous studies (Heaton, 1998). In the case of collections, the ever-expanding technologies available to all researchers increases qualitative researchers' access to documents for analysis. One example of such digital data is the open-source Qualitative Data Repository founded in 2014, which includes a recently created curation handbook that outlines the documents located within the repository and the repository's curation practices (Demgenski et al., 2021). As a result, Independent Scholars have options for qualitative data collection which mitigate the costs of in-person research.

Qualitative Methods

Given the necessity of conducting virtual qualitative research during the COVID-19 pandemic, the growth in acceptance of this mode of interpersonal communication means it has become a valuable mode of research for Independent Scholars, and also increases the equitability of qualitative research (Roberts, Pavlakis, & Richards, 2021). Yet, the collection of virtual data is not without its methodological limitations. Whether virtual or in-person, qualitative research can be seen as lacking empirical elements, containing ambiguities, and a lack of generalizability (Ochieng, 2009). As a result, the methodological limitations present in qualitative research consist of both issues with the analysis, data type, and research design.

Qualitative methods also exist within a myriad of paradigms. One of the major paradigm discussions consists of the distinction between deductive and inductive coding (see Azungah, 2018; Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). The deductive/inductive divide is further complicated due to additional paradigms. The various paradigms are even discussed with an additional abductive option (see Timmermans and Tavory, 2012; Earl Rinehart, 2021). As a result, qualitative methods exist within a research process that is diverse, where multiple types of research can be conducted under various iterations of the same method. One example of such methodological diversity can be seen in the various applications and uses of thematic analysis across the social science (see Braun & Clarke, 2022). The diversity of qualitative results in the multifaceted nature of the method (see Firestone, 1987), which results in a wide range of methodological diversity.

The unfortunate result of this abundance of methods limits the ability of Independent Scholars to access materials that would allow them to learn the intricacies of said methods. However, qualitative methods in general have been addressed (e.g. Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015) as have ways of conducting specific types of qualitative analysis (see Leavy, 2014), and there are even texts specifically aimed at retooling scholars from one method to another, such as quantitative scholars interested in learning qualitative research (Kara, 2022).

Qualitative Software

The software available for qualitative analysis has been a topic of research in social sciences, with publications emphasizing the use and comparison of the available software programs for qualitative coding (see Lewins & Silver, 2014; Woods et al., 2016, Adu, 2019). Moreover, of the top three subscription-based software packages, Atlas.ti, MAXQDA, and NVIVO, there exists comparisons that demonstrate the nuances of each of these packages for qualitative research (Franzosi et al., 2013; Hart & Achterman, 2017). The benefits of such packages are not without their limitations. For example, all the software requires specific knowledge since each one has a different user interface and capabilities. Although similarities exist in some of the general functionality of the software, each program requires time to train in such work. In particular, one study notes the technical and methodological learning curves that exist for doctoral students learning how to code qualitatively for the first time via software (Johnston 2006). One could say that an Independent Scholar trained in qualitative methods would not have as much of a methodological learning curve as a doctoral student learning qualitative coding for the first time; however, an Independent Scholar not trained in qualitative methods would likely face issues similar to those facing a doctoral student.

There is a wide range of qualitative coding software available, each with its own purpose and functionality. For Table 1, I explored qualitative software programs to see if open-source peer reviewed articles exist which would inform Independent Scholars about how the software is used in research applications. When exploring qualitative software programs, I found a total of 29 with open-access sources from reputable peer-reviewed sources. The subsequent table also provides information on the software fees and only shows software that has open-source peer-reviewed articles through which Independent Scholars can see if the software is viable for them.

One important caveat is that issues with accessibility unfortunately limit the quality of article content related to how the software programs below are described. Whenever possible, peer-reviewed articles detailing the actual functionality of the software programs listed are noted. However, the majority of the sources below are instead qualitative studies that merely mention the software was used for a qualitative analysis for the study. Despite this limitation, I hope that articles only referencing a software's use will still provide vital information to Independent Scholars interested in exploring particular software programs for their own research.[2]

Table 1: Qualitative Software and its Functionality

Software Program	Fees?	Open-Source Example	Software Program	Fees?	Open-Source Example
Aquad	No	Díaz & Entondado, 2009	MAXQDA	Yes	Mortazavi et al., 2021
ATLAS.ti	Yes	Koleilat et al., 2021	NVivo	Yes	Fowler-Davis et al., 2022
Cassandre	No	Lejeune, 2011	QCAmap	No	Leijen et al., 2022
CATMA	No	Horstmann, 2020	QDA Miner	No	Giummarra, Beck, & Gabbe, 2021
CLAN	No	Nozari & Faroqi-Shah, 2017	QDA Miner Lite	No	Savatagi, Srinivas, & Payyappallimana, 2022
Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT)	No	Rolling & Teel, 2021	qdap	No	Sapkota & Grobys, 2023
Compendium	No	Thorpe, 2008	Qiqqa	No	Bazan et al., 2020

[2] Articles were found using a Google Scholar search employing specific search terms: ("using [software's name]" or "[software's name" "qualitative software"). The only boolean operators used in the searches were quotations. Given the search strategy, the list below should be viewed as non-exhaustive and not a fully representative search of all potential qualitative softwares that exists for scholars to use. For the sake of conciseness, the full citations are located in Appendix A1.

Dedoose	Yes	Dickerson et al., 2016	Quirkos	No	Schindel et al., 2022
ELAN	No	Goswell, 2012	RQDA	No	Shawahna, 2021
FreeQDA	No	Nyikuri et al, 2019[3]	Taguette	No	van Biljon & van Niekerk, 2022
fs/QCA	No	Soda & Fumari, 2012	TAMS	No	Nosratzadeh & Edrisi, 2022
General Architecture for Text Engineering (GATE)	No	Cunningham, 2002	Tosmana	No	Casady, 2021
HyperResearch	Yes	Hesse-Biber, DuPuis, & Kinder, 1991	Transana	No	Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021
KH Coder	No	Kato et al., 2021	Weft QDA	No	Marume, De Klerk, & Khuabi, 2021

Even with the proliferation of software in research, contemporary scholarship highlights the value of including a mixed-resource approach to qualitative coding. In particular, researchers can leverage both software and traditional qualitative coding techniques – using sticky notes/pads, colored pens/pencils, and paper, to document the qualitative phenomena they are analyzing (Maher et al., 2018). Word and Excel can also be used to code qualitative data.[4] Thus, there is space even within contemporary qualitative research to rely on traditional methods, which are far more cost-effective than purchasing a software license. Even so, the existence of free software and the examples provided in Table 1 offer examples that Independent Scholars can follow to see if the software might be a viable option for their research needs.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research offers a wide range of tools to explore social phenomena. From experimental tools vital for primary data research to the use of causal reasoning in cases where social events with secondary data are explored, quantitative methods offer a rich means for empirical analysis of the social world. However, quantitative data collection and methods can be costly due to the need for large sample sizes to ensure statistical power of analysis. Moreover, quantitative methods are often faced with an array of difficulties to learning for all students: both undergraduates (see Murtonen & Lehtinen, 2003)

[3] This source states that FreeQDA is similar to NVivo but uses NVivo for its analysis.

[4] A search on the internet reveals that there is a rich array of sources of information and guides on how to do this.

and graduate students (see Pan & Tang, 2004). In the case of Independent Scholars, to learn how to conduct quantitative research in a way that they had not done before would require self-teaching approaches. Although the concept of self-teaching quantitative methods and skills to non-quantitative researchers is present (Burton, 1992), as well as the idea of self-teaching new methods for formally trained quantitative researchers (see Hobbs & Hilborn, 2006), the issue of time becomes a major hindrance to learning new methods. The subsequent discussion in this section on quantitative research explores the data, methods, and software available to independent researchers that aim to focus on a quantitative research design as part of their research agenda.

Quantitative Data

As with qualitative data, quantitative data is also derived from a wide breadth of sources: survey data, images, photos, videos, documents, and metadata. As a result, Independent Scholars have a wide range of options to explore various potential data types to answer their empirically rooted research questions. One advantage of quantitative data over qualitative data is the existence of a wide range of open-access secondary data sources. To start, many government agencies offer census data which is publicly available. It is also possible to request anonymized data from certain government offices through data request forms or reach out to university-affiliated faculty, researchers, centers, and institutes directly who might have datasets they can share. Similarly, corporations also have data request processes through which Independent Scholars can access data (see Turner et al., 2021). Thus, although paywalled datasets do present clear financial obstacles to Independent Scholars, there are other options through which data can be obtained.

The process of obtaining quantitative data also runs into issues with storage. Big data offers researchers amazing research opportunities. However, such datasets can be massive and require computing power beyond the capabilities of an Independent Scholar. For example, for analyzing big data universities often leverage supercomputing infrastructures in order to process the data. Supercomputers in higher education are also becoming an area of increased improvement for certain disciplines (Fernández et al., 2019). Although the prospect of Independent Scholars leveraging big data is null at this time, most quantitative research does not require such resources.

That said, quantitative research still requires resources that might be a barrier for Independent Scholars, such as owning two computers. For example, large datasets can still take time for statistical programs to load a dataset or run a regression model (see, so Independent Scholars with one computer will be unable to do other work while the model is running. Despite such issues with quantitative data, its slightly better accessibility and the vast number of datasets documenting social phenomena creates potential for Independent Scholars to conduct meaningful empirical research.

Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods often require a series of courses in order to ensure a student is properly trained. Although independent and self-taught means of learning quantitative methods are possible (see Burton, 1992; Hobbs & Hilborn, 2006), most individuals learn quantitative methods during their undergraduate or graduate education. This being said, the methodological complexity of more advanced quantitative methods – such as causal inference, time-series analysis, and Bayesian statistics - require a strong understanding of statistical analysis in order to begin.

Unlike qualitative methods, which are associated with an interpretivist view of data, quantitative methods are seen as positivist (Glesen & Peshkin, 1992). Such a view of quantitative methods creates a space where, at its core, the data functions in similar ways regardless of the specific quantitative method being employed: providing generalizable results. The generalizability of quantitative methods makes it an appealing application; however, the high cost of entry due to the time required to learn and practice the use of quantitative methods is one of the major costs for conducting quantitative research.

Quantitative Software

Another major obstacle to quantitative research is the need for software to run analysis and manage data, and there is a seemingly endless number of software programs and packages to conduct statistical analysis and quantitative research, some of which are shown in Table 2.[5]

As with the search for qualitative software, I encountered issues with accessibility that limit the quality of article content related to how the software programs below are described. Whenever possible, peer-reviewed articles detailing the actual functionality of the software programs listed are noted. There are a few sources which are exceptions, which are denoted via footnotes in the table. Moreover, the majority of the sources below studies that merely mention the software was used for a quantitative analysis. Despite this limitation, I hope that articles just referencing a software's use will still provide vital information to Independent Scholars.[6]

Table 2. Quantitative Software and its Functionality

Software Program	Has Fees	Open-Source Example	Software Program	Has Fees	Open-Source Example
ADaMSoft	No	Narayani & Sangeetha, 2018	Mondrian	No	Theus, 2002
ADMB	No	Fournier et al., 2012	NLOGIT	Yes	Ortega et al., 2011
Epi Info	No	Ma et al., 2008	OpenBUGS	No	Rafati, Baneshi, & Bahrampour, 2020
gretl	No	Mixon & Smith, 2006	PSPP	No	Kumari et al., 2021
Excel	Yes	Tanavalee, Luksanapruksa & Singhatanadgige 2016	Python	No	Goldstone, 2018[7]

[5] Table 2 also contains a non-exhaustive list and only shows software that has open-source peer-reviewed articles. In total only 22 software programs and packages contained peer-reviewed open access articles from reputable sources.

[6] As with the search for qualitative software programs in table 1, articles for quantitative software programs and packages in table 2 were found using a google scholar search employing specific search terms: ("using [software's name]" or "[software's name" "quantitative software"). The only boolean operators used in the searches were quotations. Given the search strategy, the list below should be viewed as non-exhaustive and not a fully representative search of all potential quantitative softwares that exists for scholars to use. For the sake of conciseness, the full citations are in Appendix A2.

[7] The following is a chapter in an online edited volume.

jamovi	No	Thomas, Ravi, & Gunjawate, 2023	R	No	Schumacker & Tomek, 2013[8]
JASP	No	Tantry et al., 2021	RStudio	No	da Silva & Moura, 2020
JMP	Yes	Campbell et al., 2021	SAS	Yes	Littell, Henry, & Ammerman, 1998
JMulTi	No	Abid, 2015	SOCR	No	Chu, Cui, & Dinov, 2009
JAGS	No	Johnson & Kuhn, 2013	SPSS	Yes	Arkkelin, 2014[9]
Mathematica	Yes	Maayah & Arqub, 2023	Stata	Yes	Baum, 2006[10]
Minitab	Yes	Roulston et al, 2022			

It is important to note that there are many statistical packages used in other types of statistical software used in non-social science disciplines but, due to the focus of this chapter on social science research, I have not discussed such software programs and packages.

LIMITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I have argued elsewhere that although using advanced techniques in gathering data is beneficial, researchers can simply get by with basic tools available to them (Waitkuweit, 2019, p. 9-10). For example, learning how to code in Python to scrape PDF documents for text data might not be a cost-effective use of a researcher's time when they can instead just run simple searches using available standard software and then document the results. In cases such as these, the ability for an Independent Scholar to find a viable alternative to more standard or even more efficient techniques gives greater potential for assessing empirical data.

The reality for many Independent Scholars, especially those interested in exploring empirical questions, is that the barriers for many methods require creative means to overcome the limitations. It is important to note that for some research the process of obtaining publicly available data, or modifying readily accessible software to assist in conducting research is also a possibility. For example, it has long been known that Microsoft Excel can be used for statistical analysis (Wegner, 2010; Carlberg, 2014; Salkind, 2015; Kunicki et al., 2019); similarly, Google Sheets can also be used for statistical analysis (Ridgeway, 2019; Kim, Mallory, & Valerio, 2020). As well as such tools, the continual growth of open-source supports are providing invaluable tools for open-source scholarship. One journal any Independent Scholar

[8] The following text is a book not a peer-reviewed article.

[9] The following is an open-source textbook for teaching SPSS. It has 305 citations listed in Google Scholar as of 5/30/2023.

[10] The following is a 28-page preview of a popular introductory book to using Stata.

interested in empirical data should explore is the *Journal of Open Source Software*, which began publishing in 2016 and contains reviews of open-source and free software used for various types of research.

CONCLUSION

As this chapter has shown, there exists a clear cost for doing research at every phase of the research process, in terms of both time and money. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial spirit of Independent Scholars (see Gross, 1984), should not be underestimated and the currently available digital tools give all of us increased access to empirical sources. The goal of this chapter has been to provide a preliminary discussion of how individuals can leverage available tools to conduct data collection and research despite the presence of clear limitations, and I have highlighted the potential for Independent Scholars to employ online and computational resources to conduct empirical research that are low-cost, or even free. Thus, as the first quarter of the 21st century provides a wealth of new options and opportunities for Independent Scholars to engage in empirical research, Independent Scholars may be able to conduct big data analysis with the hoped-for advent of computers with the computational power necessary to conduct such research. Given the potential ingenuity that Independent Scholars can show, I hope to have at least demonstrated that empiricism in Independent Scholarship is not an impossibility, but that contemporary research resources provide a potentially great opportunity for us all.

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APPENDIX A1

Peer-Reviewed and Open-Source Papers using Qualitative Software

Bazan, C., Gaultois, H., Shaikh, A., Gillespie, K., Frederick, S., Amjad, A., ... & Belal, N. (2020). A systematic literature review of the influence of the university's environment and support system on the precursors of social entrepreneurial intention of students. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, *9*, 1-28.

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APPENDIX A2

Peer-Reviewed and Open-Source Papers using Quantitative Software

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TECHNICAL WRITING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: ARGUMENTATION STRATEGIES

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No matter how carefully you do your research, readers will judge it by how well you report it, so you must know what they will look for in a clearly written report that earns their respect. Kate L. Turabian

INTRODUCTION

You've done the scholarly research and know what interesting or innovative claim you have to offer to your audience, now it is time to turn your attention to how to report your results. It takes some skill to know how to get your work into shape as a cogent report for a particular audience. Fortunately, scholarly and scientific writing is an art that can be mastered. It involves skills ranging from making a persuasive argument and organizing your writing, to building with the nuts and bolts of grammar and writing style, to designing tables and figures to aid your communication, to citing your sources correctly, and last but not least, to avoiding plagiarism. Although your proximal goals include getting your work published, the ultimate goal is to earn the respect of readers, which in turn, increases your status as a professional.

Not necessarily bound by academic and disciplinary norms, Independent Scholars could have the additional challenge of writing for a wider variety of audiences and formats. These may be beyond academic specialists in one's own field, reaching those doing interdisciplinary work, general educated audiences, and even local laypeople. Given the variety of ways that Independent Scholars desire to be heard in the twenty-first century, any project might need to be packaged as an oral presentation, a podcast, a video, or as a single-panel, colorful visual display. Regardless of the audience and format, scholars and scientists earn respect by constructing a solid structure of a cogent argument that the audience can understand.

The quality of the argument can make or break your work. In fact, more than any other skill, the best writers take total control over their use of scholarly argument, tailoring the final products to particular situations. Although the quality of argument is crucial to determining the quality of published work, there is a lot of diversity in training graduate students in argumentation skills. Therefore, this chapter does not attempt to teach all of the skills needed for writing, but addresses only argumentation strategy and organization. It presents options, showing you how to select a strategy for your goal of persuading a particular group of readers to accept your claim that you worked so hard to discover.[1] Although your training might have differed, arguments, as we will see, are just as relevant in the sciences as in history and the humanities.

[1] Argumentation and organization methods in this chapter are adapted from Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), chapter 5, "Constructing Your Argument" and the Little Red Schoolhouse writing course at the University of Chicago.

Who Is Your Audience?

The first step is to identify characteristics of your audience. You might decide to write for specialists in an academic field, or for multidisciplinary readers of a particular type of journal, or for general educated readers. You should also take stock of their probable knowledge of your topic, and whether they are experts, generalists, or new to it. Is your audience:

- The "choir" you want to "preach" to?
- Inherently skeptical of your claim?
- Unfamiliar with your topic?
- Likely to be disinterested?
- Likely to use the same technical terms you do, but in a different way?

Their likely perspectives could be determining factors in your choice of argumentation strategy: perspectives such as having been trained in a particular way, and supporting or opposing a particular thinker, school of thought, or political agenda.

Where does your work fit within your discipline?

Before we introduce the forms of arguments, you should identify where you fit within your discipline because you should select the form of argument strategically to achieve a clearer, more persuasive presentation. Do you fit well within an academic discipline, asking the same questions that the field asks, and using accepted methods to contribute to a common goal? Your argument can be simple and easy to construct. Are you trying to destabilize *status quo* beliefs? If this is your mission, your argument should be strategized to accumulate understanding and goodwill from your readers before presenting a claim that they would likely reject if they were to see it early on, by itself. Are you working across multiple disciplines? Readers will probably need more background on the multiple topics that you address before launching into a claim that they might not otherwise adequately understand.

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Regardless of what kind of task you pursue in the social sciences, humanities, history, and even the natural and life sciences—everyone engages in scholarly argumentation. Scholarly argument today is not about polemics, or about intimidating an opponent into silence or submission, but an exchange of ideas between professionals who share views about something. In fact, respectable scholarly argument rarely involves an "opponent" at all. Rather, according to Turabian, it "resembles an amiable conversation in which you and imagined readers reason together to solve a problem whose solution they don't yet accept" (49). Scholarly work for peers engages an academic community by adding to an ongoing conversation in the literature. Your challenge is not necessarily to deal with opposition to your claims, but to persuade readers to accept them based on good reasons that, in turn, are based on reliable evidence.

Kate Turabian offers a description that is easy to grasp. She says that in face-to-face conversation, making such a cooperative argument is easy: you state your reasons and evidence as you would engage friends sitting around a table with you one evening with your favorite libation and snacks. You discuss a topic that interests all of you to arrive at an understanding that brings together all of the most relevant perspectives, including harsh critics, and increases the robustness and clarity with which the argument is articulated at the end. The discussion volleys between you as you offer a claim and some reasons to believe it. They do not accept your claim as presented, but probe for details. You clarify them. They raise objections. You respond, perhaps with questions of your own. They answer them and offer their points of view. You respond by either connecting their points of view to yours or refuting them. They still have some doubts and ask more questions about the relevance of your reasons or evidence. You finish the discussion when either you respond adequately to all of their reasonable doubts, making a strong, complete case that leaves "no stone unturned"—or when the bottle is empty, whichever comes first. When it works well, it is a relaxed, thoughtful, back-and-forth discussion that develops and tests the best case that you and your friends can make together.

When writing for scholarly audiences, you need to adroitly construct that kind of cooperative engagement on your own, without the aid of friends sitting at the table with you (though you may do it by yourself accompanied by wine and cheese). You need to know your audience well enough that you can imagine what your readers will already know, what they will not know, what they will care about, agree with, object to, and what alternative points of view they are likely to bring to your work. In scholarly argument, you need to not only answer your imagined readers' questions, but also to ask them on their behalf. You'll need to articulate these as often and as keenly as real readers will. The quality of your argument increases as you incorporate accurate descriptions of the points of view of your harshest critics and address them with sound logic. Although you should not write from emotion or ideology, sometimes it may be desirable to address your critics' emotional and ideological perspectives where they exist. Your aim is to test your claim and its support thoroughly enough so that you offer readers the best case you can make. The argument ends when you respond to all of their reasonable doubts—their questions and reservations. In a good scholarly article or book, readers hear traces of that imagined conversation.

ESSENTIALS OF AN ARGUMENT

Before launching into options for argumentation strategy, let's begin with the basic elements of the writer's art. We also need to know what constitute conditions for success and failure. The basic parts of an argument are the claim, your reasons for supporting the claim, and your evidence that supports your reasons. A full argument can be represented by five familiar questions from face-to-face discussions:

- What are you claiming?
- What are your reasons that support it?
- What evidence supports your reasons?
- What about objections and other points of view, and your responses to them?
- How are your reasons relevant to your claim?

The first two questions offer your claim and the reasons you believe support it. In scholarly work, however, you cannot assume that your imagined readers will accept your reasons at first. Rather they are likely to doubt your simple statements of the reasons and may also wonder whether your reasons are truly relevant. And so, you imagine that they probe for more information, among other tests, before being persuaded. In the next few sections, let's build up the parts of the argument beginning with simple communication.

Claims

Let's begin at the beginning by taking a close look at claims, the most basic element of an argument. Here are three conversations between two people. Which of these are arguments?

Conversation #1
Person 1: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham.
Person 1: Glad to meet you. I'm Mark Smith.

Conversation #2
Person 2: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham.
Person 2: "Hamm?" Is that German?
Me: The name is actually Czech, shortened to "Ham" by my grandfather at Ellis Island.

Conversation #3
Person 3: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham.
Person 3: May I see your identification?
Me: Certainly. Here is my passport ...

The *claim* is the central statement in an argument, which answers the question, *So what?* but not every sentence that appears to be central is a claim. A few more actions are needed to turn a proposition into a claim. A sentence is a claim in an argument only if both the writer and readers understand that:

1. Readers doubt that the sentence is true, and
2. The writer is responding to that doubt.

So, if readers do not doubt, then there is no argument—even if the writer thinks there is. By this definition, only conversation #3 is an argument because it is the only one that had a statement of a claim and that claim was doubted. We can map it this way:

Conversation #3
Person 3: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham. (*I* ***claim*** *that my name is Sandra Ham.*)
Person 3: May I see your identification? (*I* ***doubt*** *that your name is Sandra Ham.*)
Me: Certainly. Here is my passport. (*I respond to your doubt by presenting* ***evidence*** *to support my claim.*)

Why are we putting so much emphasis on readers' doubts? Although we make commitments to ideas and beliefs, we rarely do so with absolute certainty. Since we as scholars and scientists aim to either generate new knowledge or supersede existing beliefs about some small part of the natural or human world in an evolving chain of knowledge, neither our predecessors nor we operate in a world in which certainty is possible. Rather, our answers, solutions, and conclusions are often merely probable. To say that "science is fallible" means that the nature of academic advances is that someday, nearly every theory will be superseded by another that fits the observed world better. And so your claims are true with only some probability, and thus, can also be doubted by a reasonable interlocutor in your audience. Thus, your task is to persuade your readers by constructing that imagined dialogue to answer all of their doubts and win them over.

A claim engages readers by answering the question, S*o what?* and it also provides a road map for readers so that they can anticipate and follow the argument. We will discuss these in detail in the later sections of this chapter.

Tying all of this information together, I might claim, for example, that Ida Appleby was the first woman to manage a textile factory in Birmingham, England, as early as 1867. Readers could doubt any part of my claim. My job is to convince my readers that Ida Appleby worked in the textile industry in Birmingham and in 1867, held the post of a factory manager. The next sections present ways to anticipate and address doubts. If I am successful, my reader will change her position as a result of my persuasive, evidence-based argument. Since all scholarly work involves making claims and persuading audiences to accept the claims, no matter what kind of scholarly or scientific work you do, your job is to construct your claims and their support as an argument.

Conditions for Failed Arguments

There are four common problems with a writer's approach which will lead to failure. By failure I do not mean using weak logic or failing to reject your hypotheses, though these may occur at the same time, and your readers will not be persuaded by your claim. Rather, failed arguments occur when the writer is not fully aware of the need to engage in argumentation. Even experienced writers miss the mark at times, not anticipating doubt and not showing readers when both writer and they are engaged together in argument. When this happens, writers are not only unsuccessful in their goal of persuading readers to accept their claims, but talk past readers rather than connecting, potentially damaging their own credibility. Arguments fail (and your credibility suffers) when one of four possible disconnects arise between writer and reader:

Problem 1. The reader (person 4) is arguing but the writer (me) isn't.

Person 4: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham.
Person 4: May I see your identification?
Me: The name is actually Czech, shortened by my grandfather at Ellis Island.

In this case, the reader doubts the claim that I am Sandra Ham but the writer does not realize this, and proceeds to describe or explain something rather than provide reasons and evidence that address the reader's doubt.

Problem 2. The writer (me) is arguing but the reader (person 5) isn't.

Person 5: Hello.
Me: Hello. My name is Sandra Ham.
Person 5: "Ham." Is that German?
Me: Here is my passport.

Here the problem is not as serious, but you should try to avoid it anyway. The writer imagines that the reader doubts a claim that he, in fact, accepts. Since the writer imagines a doubt that is not real, she offers evidence that is unnecessary. Readers would tend to view this writer as inexperienced. Knowing your audience will help you avoid this.

Problem 3. The writer relies upon structural cues and does not address readers' doubts.

Me: Ida Appleby was the first woman to manage a textile factory in Birmingham, England, as early as 1867.

Person 6: Did she have the title of "Manager" or was she the most experienced woman worker, earning remarkable respect?

Me: Since she lived with her two younger sisters, therefore, she had time to devote to managing a textile factory.

Structural words and phrases that cue readers that the writer is arguing, such as "thus" or "therefore" can lull a writer into believing that he is doing just that when, in fact, he is not. It is tempting to think that the cues alone make an argument because it looks like one and feels like one. But it can fail to be read as one because it does not respond to readers' doubts (or might not, in fact, be logical).

Problem 4. The writer fails to engage with the audience at all.

It is as if there are two different conversations going on and that the writer neither knows nor cares about the reader's views. This problem has grown to pandemic proportions, in part as a result of widespread training in how to deal with the media. Using a technique sometimes called "block and bridge," a person talking with a reporter, when asked a question that she is either not prepared to answer or does not want to answer, responds by "blocking" the question and "bridging" to a prepared message that she wants the media to report. In the example 3 above, I do not directly address Person 6's question but respond with information that I am prepared to give. This method of communicating was originally intended to be used only on rare occasions by a small class of professionals in public settings because failing to give a direct response is considered rude behavior. Yet it has become an accepted – even normative – mode of everyday (non-)communication by everyone. Regardless of its current fashionableness, writing and speaking in this way always fails.

Reasons And Evidence

Although we give reasons and evidence all the time to support claims in everyday arguments that we might not even recognize as such, their ubiquity could make it easy to confuse them when you make deliberate arguments in your writing. Turabian (2018, 54) clarifies the difference that I have adapted in table 1.

So, we own our *reasons* and borrow our *evidence*. Our work is our own because we present arguments for a claim using reasons or grounds that only we can generate in our particular way. This is why scholarship that relies too much upon literature review or quotes from others (lots of evidence, few grounds) may give the impression that the scholar is inexperienced or a weak thinker. At the other end of the spectrum, this explains why influential, field-defining commentaries from senior members of a field might not cite much literature at all, but elegantly present novel insights (grounds!) for a high-level claim that draw upon just a few key references.

You are probably already familiar with the accepted forms of evidence in your field. Evidence might be a quote from the obituary of the person you are studying, a quote from an interview, or a quote from primary or secondary literature, or a description of an artwork, or a summary statistic of survey responses, or measurements taken on an instrument.

Table 1. Comparison of reasons and evidence in argumentation.

Reasons	Evidence
We think of logical reasons (within our own minds).	We collect hard evidence (from elsewhere).
Abstract, from our own minds and so they do not need citations.	Tangible, from sources external to our minds, and so they need citations or descriptions of what you did to find it.
We base reasons on evidence.	We don't base evidence on reasons.
Reasons need the support of evidence.	Evidence needs to be referenced.
Synonymous with "a sufficient ***ground*** of explanation or of logical defense, especially one that supports a conclusion or explains a fact".[2]	
Ida Appleby never married and had no children and so she had time to devote to managing a textile factory.	Quote from Ida Appleby's obituary published in a newspaper that states that she never married and had no children, and that she spent her adult life at one textile factory in Birmingham.

In the example in table 1, a reader could doubt that Ida Appleby never married – "Really, never? She could have married in middle age at the time when you claim that she managed a factory." In order to address these doubts, I give evidence to support my reason – here, from her obituary, but it could be from diaries, church registries, business records, or newspaper articles.

Evidence may seem easier to grasp than reasons because the standard research methods in many fields specify that scientific and scholarly work must engage with the current literature by citing what is already known. If you were trained to write by focusing on citing literature and not pay much attention to argument or reasons, you should make sure that you fill in the gaps in your arguments so that the evidence you present supports logical reasons that are your own. We will discuss this again in the section on forms of argument.

Readers' Questions

Turabian (53) elaborates on the ways that readers' points of view can impact your task as a writer. Your best readers may be the most critical ones. They will read fairly, but not accept everything you say at face value. You should expect, and even desire this because it indicates that readers care enough about your topic to engage in the conversation you started. They will probe for clarifications, raise objections, and imagine alternatives that you might not. Turabian classifies readers' questions into two types: those from problems internal to your argument, and those from external sources.

Internal Problems

These usually relate to your evidence. Imagine a reader making the following criticisms about your evidence, then construct a brief argument in response:

[2] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Edition* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2019).

- Your evidence is from an unreliable or out-of-date source.
- It is inaccurate.
- It is insufficient.
- It doesn't fairly represent all of the evidence that is available.
- It is the wrong kind of evidence for our field.
- It is irrelevant because it does not count as evidence.

Here are three common criticisms that give rise to questions about reasons:

- Your reasons are inconsistent or contradictory.
- They are too weak or too few to support your claim.
- They are irrelevant to your claim.

External Problems

This type of question comes from readers who see the world differently than you do. Whenever these come up, you might be tempted to ignore them. Your job is to acknowledge and respond to them. If you treat them as simple objections and argue that you are right and they are wrong, you will lose readers and credibility. Rather, acknowledge the differences and compare them with your perspective so that readers can understand your argument on its own terms. Although they still might not agree with you, by responding fairly you generate goodwill by showing them that you understand and respect their views.

- Your logic is not how I reason.
- I'm not familiar with the definition of Y that you presented, and I use that term differently.
- I offer you more evidence Z (that you believe is irrelevant).

You can see from these kinds of questions that most of the time, readers are not being picky or difficult when they ask them, but are drawing out a rich, more comprehensive study of your topic from you. Good writers are skillful in habitually anticipating, asking, and responding to these internal and external questions in writing.

Warrants

Sometimes (actually, quite often) readers might agree that your reasons are true statements, and your evidence really exists, but doubt that your reason or evidence is relevant. Your grounds might not seem relevant to the claim, and therefore, not grounds at all. Or your evidence might not seem relevant to its reason; thus, the evidence you chose to use does not appear to support your reason. You might make an assumption that connects these, but readers could disagree with your assumption, or fail to understand it. To address questions of relevance in our logic, we use *warrants*. Even experienced writers find that these are more difficult to work with than claims, grounds, and evidence; yet, they have the power to make or break an argument.

A *warrant* is an idea that links a reason to a claim. It links two notions, justifying agreement with one on the basis of the other. Warrants justify agreement with one on the basis of the other.

Figure 1. Schematic relationship between warrants and the relevance of reasons or grounds for a claim.

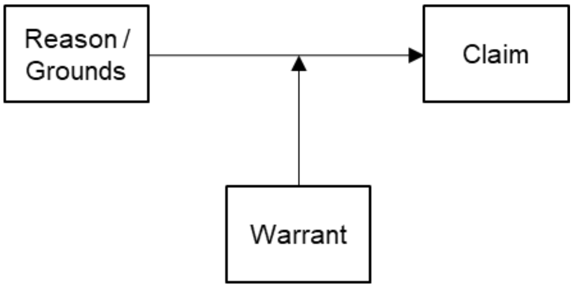


Figure 1 shows that a claim is directly supported by its reason or grounds, while this relationship has a warrant that affects the link. Every connection between a claim and its reason has a warrant but most of the time they are not stated because both reader and writer share knowledge of them in common, and they are so obvious or unconscious that they do not need to be stated. For example, if I say that "the weather forecast calls for rain tomorrow, therefore it is going to rain" the claim is "therefore it is going to rain" and the grounds for it is "the weather forecast calls for rain tomorrow." The warrant for this relationship is "the one-day weather forecast for this area is generally accurate and reliable." But that warrant does not need to be stated if everyone in the area knows and assumes that tomorrow's weather forecast is generally accurate and reliable. This unstated knowledge justifies agreement with the claim that it is going to rain tomorrow based on the reason that the weather forecast calls for rain. Warrants may come from generalizations about nature that were found in previous research, or they may come from folk knowledge about how the world works. In academic writing, they are often shared disciplinary knowledge from important, highly cited articles.

Warrants are the most treacherous element of arguments. What makes them difficult is that in order to get them right, we need to know something about the minds of our readers; when we get them wrong, it can cost us respect and credibility. When we rely upon unconscious warrants, we usually assume that readers will rely on them too. They might. If they do, there is no problem.

But if a reader does not share your knowledge – or at least, your warrant that comes easily to your mind – then a reader might be confused. Writers often misjudge readers' minds, which is why it is so important to know your audience as well as you can. When it comes to warrants, writers often assume that readers will apply a warrant that they, in fact, do not. This can happen among specialists, and there are ways to deal with it. Even more important for Independent Scholars who do interdisciplinary work, write for general, educated audiences, or lay audiences – you need to pay close attention to what readers might be expected to know and not know. The reason is because heterogeneous audiences are more difficult to connect with. To overcome the confusion, you need to clarify your warrant by cuing or even stating it. The next section offers a method for handling warrants.

But additional factors need to be considered so that you do not go too far. In professional settings, warrants may be known by everyone in the community but not by outsiders or those new to the area; outsiders who state them may appear to be either condescending or naive.

Five Ways to Handle Warrants

The following five ways to handle warrants are guides to be adapted to your specific situations.

1. Readers do not doubt your reason for a claim or they are already familiar with your warrant. In response, you do not need to do anything; there is no need to state it.
2. Readers might forget or overlook a familiar warrant that everyone in the audience knows. Here, all that is needed is a brief word or phrase as a gesture to prompt their recall. Add a few words of reference or a reference to the literature.
3. Readers might confuse your warrant for linking a reason to a claim with another reason with which they are familiar. This might occur when a writer makes a novel argument that disrupts the *status quo* beliefs or uses a novel method to address a familiar research question. If you suspect that readers might use a warrant that you do not intend, include a full statement to specify yours to head off the confusion you anticipate. One sentence will often suffice.
4. Readers might be unfamiliar with your warrant, especially if they are not specialists in the topic or field. These readers might need a little education to be brought up to speed with your knowledge. In this case, do more than simply state the warrant but also explain it and elaborate your reason why it justifies connecting your reason to your claim. If you expect that your audience will include both specialists who are familiar with the warrant and non-specialists, then also indicate that you are speaking to the non-specialist readers so that you do not appear naive to the specialists.
5. Readers might doubt the connection you make, even after clearly stating and explaining it. Since readers have genuine doubt about your warrant, you need to argue why it is appropriate. Do this by turning it into a claim that is one level beneath your main claim and use sub-reasons and sub-warrants to address the doubts of this new sub-claim. Consider whether the argument for the warrant should be included in the main text, or might be more appropriate as a footnote or endnote.

After addressing all of the doubts, return to where you left off with reasons for your main claim.

Criteria for a Successful Argument

This section introduced the elements of an argument and their conditions for success and failure. At the beginning of this section, we met five questions that need to be addressed in every successful argument. Here they are again:

- What are you claiming?
- What are your reasons that support it?
- What evidence supports your reasons?
- What about objections and other points of view, and your responses to them?
- How are your reasons relevant to your claim?

These correspond to the elements of arguments: a claim, reasons or grounds, evidence, questions, objections and other points of view and responses to them, and warrants. Next, we will assemble them together into the major forms of argument and consider how to strategize writing them.

FORMS OF ARGUMENT

There are four basic forms of arguments that differ in the order in which claims, reasons, and warrants and evidence are presented. They have strategic uses for different kinds of audiences, goals, and subject matter for the writer. Earlier we talked about identifying characteristics of your audience, and about your location in your field. These are important because your writing strategy will probably differ in response to these factors. Independent scholars who do research which they package into several products for multiple audiences should pay attention to their goal and audience for each product because they might need to use different forms of the same argument for different products. Among the four forms, we will see that one form is expected by scientists, and the others are tools for historians and humanists. It is important to develop skills in constructing arguments using these forms because they do a lot of the work of communicating clearly and persuading readers about your claims.

Basic Form

The basic form of argument has a straightforward structure that makes it easy to be clear:

Figure 2. Pattern for the Basic form of argument.

Claim
Reasons or Grounds
Evidence
Warrant
(Explain warrant)
(Argue for warrant)

What about this pattern makes it easy to be clear? First, starting off with the claim is a powerful design strategy for argumentation. The claim should answer the question, S*o what?* By doing this, readers will be engaged in your writing and continue to read past the introduction. Moreover, since the claim is already known before the rest of reasons and warrants are presented, readers have a sense of where the argument is going. The human mind needs to believe that it is being led in a worthwhile direction, and this is accomplished by stating the claim first.

Following your claim, you give your reasons or grounds for why readers should accept your claim as true. Readers could have several potential responses to a reason. Readers could accept your reason, requiring nothing more of you. But if readers doubt your reason, you explain and support it with either logic or evidence. This form of argument works well because it is usually easier to understand the relationship between two things when one is already familiar with them. An outline of a complete argument using the basic form might look like figure 3.

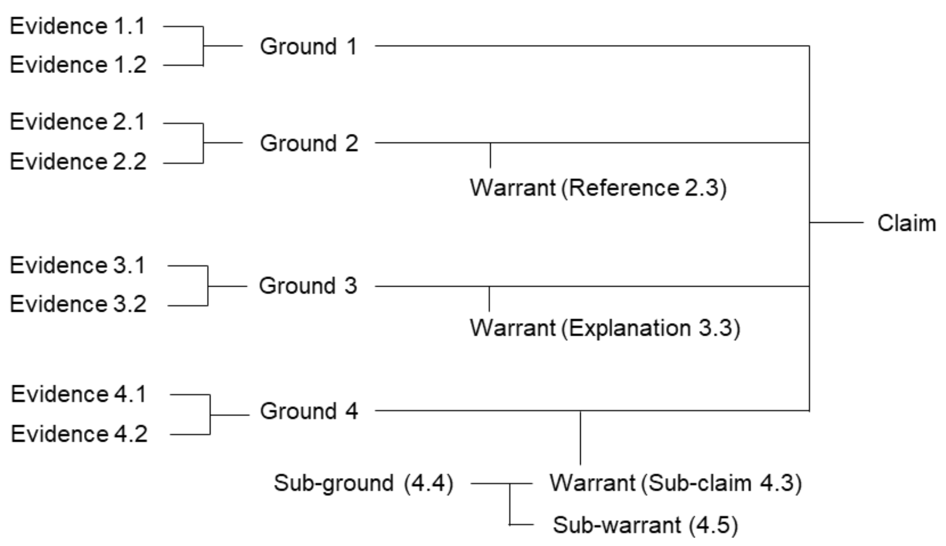
The outline shows a formula that may be familiar from the "sandwich essay" that you might have learned in middle school. It uses the introduction to state the claim, then presents three reasons or grounds to support the claim, and restates the claim at the end. Although it is simple to write and effective to follow, academic writers could constrain themselves too much by using it because readers have doubts of various kinds, which require additional parts of the argument in order to adequately address them.

Figure 3. Outline for a Basic argument.

I. Introduction: State the claim as a sentence.
II. Ground 1: State one reason why readers should accept the claim.
A. Evidence 1.1: Cite evidence from study 1 in the literature.
B. Evidence 1.2: Cite evidence from study 2 in the literature.
III. Ground 2: State a second reason why readers should accept the claim.
A. Evidence 2.1: Cite evidence from study 3 in the literature.
B. Evidence 2.2: Cite evidence from study 4 in the literature.
IV. Ground 3: State a third reason why readers should accept the claim.
A. Evidence 3.1: Cite evidence from study 5 in the literature.
B. Evidence 3.2: Cite evidence from study 6 in the literature.
V. Restate claim, articulating it with more nuance and detail in light of the entire argument.

While you proceed through the argument, the basic structure can become longer and complex as you anticipate and address questions, objections, and doubts by your imagined readers. As you develop skill in writing, you increasingly create doubts so that you control how readers proceed through your discussion. You make a complete argument by continuing to give reasons, imagined doubts, and answers to them until there are no more for your claim. Your argument might have a schematic structure like the one shown in figure 4, which supports the claim with four grounds and associated evidence and warrants.

Figure 4. Schematic diagram of a complex argument that includes anticipation of several kinds of doubts and using the appropriate warrants to address them.



The complex argument in figure 4 is a better representation of actual scholarly argument because it depicts several of the common kinds of doubts that readers have, and the more complex ways that are needed to address them. Ground 1 is not doubted so the warrant is not stated. For ground 2, all that is needed is a brief reference so that readers will accept your reason for the claim. Ground 3 needs more work including an explanation of your logic to back it up. Ground 4 is doubted by skeptics who hold a different perspective. You respond by turning that reason into a claim and arguing for it with sub-ground and a sub-warrant. All of the forms presented in this chapter should be modified in a similar manner to fulfill your need to masterfully compose your imagined collaborative discussion.

Claim—Warrant—Grounds Form

The claim—warrant—grounds form is an alternative to the basic form.

Figure 5. Pattern of the Claim—Warrant—Grounds form of argument.

Claim
Warrant
(Explain warrant)
(Argue for warrant)
Reasons or Grounds

In the sciences the standard format for journal articles is Introduction—Methods—Results—Discussion—Conclusion. While this formula for scientific reports is often treated as an exercise in "filling in the blanks" to write a manuscript, it is actually an argument. The scientific journal article format is the claim—warrant—grounds form of argument. Scientific reports that are written as deliberate arguments are usually more cogent and persuasive than reports that are generated as mere formulaic writing exercises.

Table 2. Mapping from the scientific journal article format to the claim—warrant—grounds form of argument.

Scientific Journal Article Format	Parts of an Argument
Introduction	Background and problem statement leading up to and concluding with the claim
Methods	Warrants for the use of the data to link to the claim
Results	Reasons and new evidence from data
Discussion	Reasons and evidence from the literature Limitations of the warrants
Conclusion	Restates the claim with appropriate qualifiers and detail

Table 2 shows how the scientific journal article format maps onto the claim—warrant—grounds form of argument. The Introduction section engages the reader's interest and gives background for understanding the claim, which is stated at the end of the section as the study aim. The Methods section explains and justifies the method for the study. This provides the warrants for why readers should take the data and analysis seriously since the findings provide the main evidence linking data with the claim. The Results section gives the main reason or grounds for the claim, backed up with evidence found in the data that were collected for the study.

The Discussion gives additional reasons for accepting the findings from the data and imagines and responds to readers' doubts, questions, objections, and perspectives. Additional grounds are derived from contextualizing the findings by integrating them with previous literature, revising the state of knowledge of the topic in light of the new data. This is also where anticipated objections and doubts are stated and addressed, along with alternative points of view and their responses. In the sciences, the doubts come from reviewing the literature, or presenting a work-in-progress at a conference to obtain constructive feedback. Objections and alternative perspectives often come to light during in-person conversations with colleagues at conferences. The paragraph of limitations is where the weaknesses (biases) of the warrant are stated and addressed. Often the way to handle warrants for your own data is to explain what you did to minimize the bias in the data, state the degree of bias that remains after your fix, and its probable impact upon the study conclusion. Finally, the Conclusion restates the claim with additional specificity following the presentation of the study and its integration with the literature, tempered by the limitations of the study.

Claim-Last Form

How might you deal with skeptical or hostile readers who would quickly reject your claim and not read your work? These are times when strategically, it may be advantageous to state your claim last, after presenting your reasons and warrants. These are more complex, claim-last argument forms which have two variants shown in figure 6.

Figure 6. Two possible patterns of the Claim-Last form of argument.

Reasons or Grounds **Warrant** **(Explain warrant)** **(Argue for warrant)** **Claim**		**Warrant** **(Explain warrant)** **(Argue for warrant)** **Reasons or Grounds** **Claim**

Claim-last argument structures may begin with reasons or with warrants and do all of the work of the argument before stating the claim. They can be extremely effective as an argumentation strategy. These structures should be considered whenever a specific effect is desired:

1. To create a sense of objectivity. The writer appears to have created and tested the warrants prior to knowing what claim he would make.
2. To create a sense of deductive logic. The warrant(s) appear to lead inexorably to the claim.
3. To delay the claim to which he knows his readers are likely to be hostile. By delaying, the writer can lead readers down a path to think about the warrant and the reasons, moving toward agreement with the writer, before their hostility is triggered. Readers will be less likely to challenge the reasons and warrants because they understand your perspective, and less likely to challenge the claim because they have already been persuaded by the reasons and warrants.

Although claim-last arguments can turn out amazingly well when composed by good writers, this form of argument is more difficult to write effectively than claim-first forms because it risks losing the reader's interest before she gets to the claim. In a long work, a lot may happen in the text and need to be grasped without the reader knowing why she is reading the work at all. Since the concluding claim neither offers an early answer to the question, *So what?* nor provides a road map that organizes the reader's understanding of the text as she reads, another method is required to help readers follow along with the argument. The most important alternative source of a road map is strong thematic strings. These are sets of key words and related terms that you can use to organize your paragraphs and sections to give readers another means of ordering their reading. We will dive into thematic strings in the section on organization.

Warrant-in-Problem Form

Yet another challenging form to write puts the warrant first. This is among the most powerfully persuasive techniques in argumentation – good to consider for skeptical and hostile readers. We know that it can be difficult for readers to understand a warrant before they know the claim and reason, affecting their motivation to continue reading. But when a warrant is presented early, embedded in a problem that the readers care about, they can be engaged to come along with you for the rest of the argument to find out how you solve the problem. The problem, rather than a claim, gives readers expectations for the subsequent text.

One way to use this form of argument is to present the problem in such a way as to hint at the criteria for a solution, playing with generalities and specific instances of them (Figure 7). The problem description gets readers' attention by including instabilities in the *status quo* beliefs or knowledge and also a cost of that instability. The warrant for your claim is presented as a description of something general that could lead to a solution – either conditions for a solution, or an approach that could be taken. These, in turn, have general consequences that could be the key to your solution to the problem. In such a case, the claim and grounds are then presented as specific instances of the general approach: the grounds would be a specific instance of the general conditions and the claim would be a specific instance of the general consequences. The important feature of this form is that the work begins with a problem and the warrant is integrated within; the claim and supporting reasons can follow in any order (Figure 7).

This form can present the claim after the problem and warrant, or claim last, as in figure 8. The selection of one or the other is a strategic move.

Figure 7. Pattern for the Warrant-in-Problem form of argument.

Problem–Warrant
* General conditions or approach toward a solution
* General consequences of those conditions

Claim (*This is the solution...*)
* Specific instance of the general consequences

Reasons or Grounds
* Specific instances of the general conditions or approach

Figure 8. Warrant-in-Problem with claim last.

Problem–Warrant

Reasons or Grounds

Claim

ORGANIZATION

For any form of argument, readers expect predictable organization for your writing to be perceived as textually coherent and clearly written. This is based in part upon how the mind works. Earlier, we discussed the fact that our minds expect to see a road map at the beginning of a text. We want to know what to look for as we read because the human mind naturally follows the organization that is presented early on. A statement of a claim presented early in an argument fulfills this function well because it is the road map from the beginning to the end of the argument; its grounds and evidence are predictable stops along the way. Since a claim is the best way to establish readers' expectations, readers tend to have more cognitive difficulty when they encounter other parts of the argument that are just parts, not a road map. When a reader cannot follow an argument, she might stop reading. This is why writers should take extra care to plan claim-last and warrant-in-problem forms.

This section addresses coherence in the organization of paragraphs and multi-paragraph units of text, which accompany the skillful use of the elements and forms of argumentation. There are a few more elements to a road map that are at the level of sentences and words as they are chosen and strategically placed within paragraphs and sections. We discuss them here so that you can fulfill readers' expectations for clear and respectable writing – strategically.

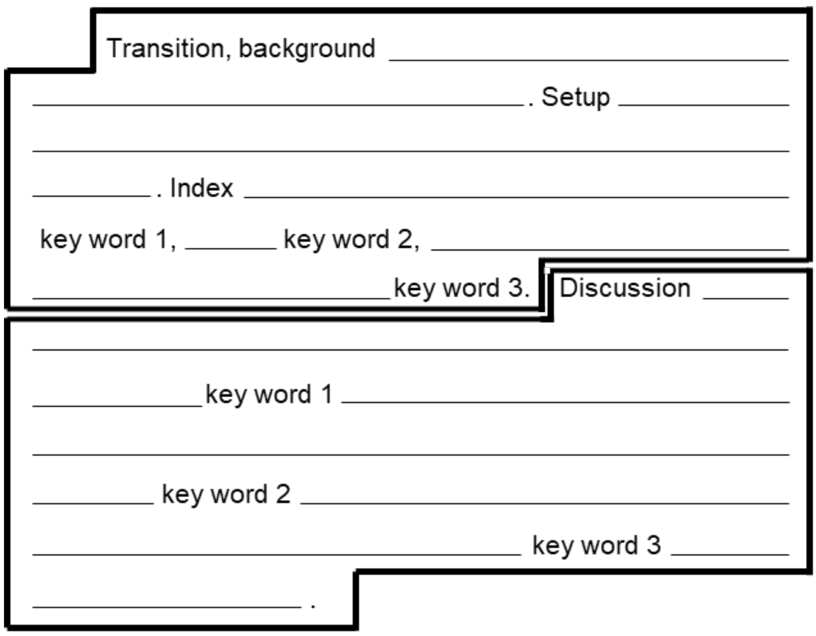
Coherence

Coherence is the organization at the level of paragraphs and sections. To write coherently, writers need not only to use an appropriate form to respond to readers' doubts about their claim and grounds, but also strategically use key words or themes, an index sentence, and point sentence. Coherence occurs when there is a match between key terms in an index sentence that occurs early in a paragraph and the words and concepts in the rest of the paragraph. It is a fractal property that is true of not only paragraphs, but also sections, larger units, and a work as a whole. All of these units of text have index positions that establish a reader's expectations with a set of words that are "indexed." When the paragraph or unit of text meets their expectations by elaborating on the indexed words, readers perceive coherence in the text. Any paragraph can be structured in this way, whether in the introduction, discussion offering reasons and evidence, or explaining extended warrants.

Writers should also pay attention to the point sentence. This is the sentence that answers the question, *so what*? It often occurs at the end of a unit of text. In the claim-first forms, the point sentence restates the claim, often with more detail than at the beginning of the text. In claim-last forms, the point sentence is the statement of the claim.

Figure 9 shows a paragraph indicating the index position and the discussion. The index position is often not the first sentence, especially in a new section because two or three sentences may be needed in order to transition from the previous paragraph and to set readers up to grasp the key concepts. There are four types of openings to paragraphs: problem, complex, oppositional, and a question. A paragraph might begin with a statement of a problem that the point (at the end) solves. In a complex opening, it could take two or three sentences to prepare readers with the background they need in order to deal with the key concepts. An oppositional opening explains two ideas that the writer is going to contrast, arguing that his is superior to the other. This background lets readers know about the two ideas. Finally, a paragraph could begin with a question or paradox that the rest of the paragraph will resolve. When using this type, two or three sentences may be used to set up the question and give a provisional answer.

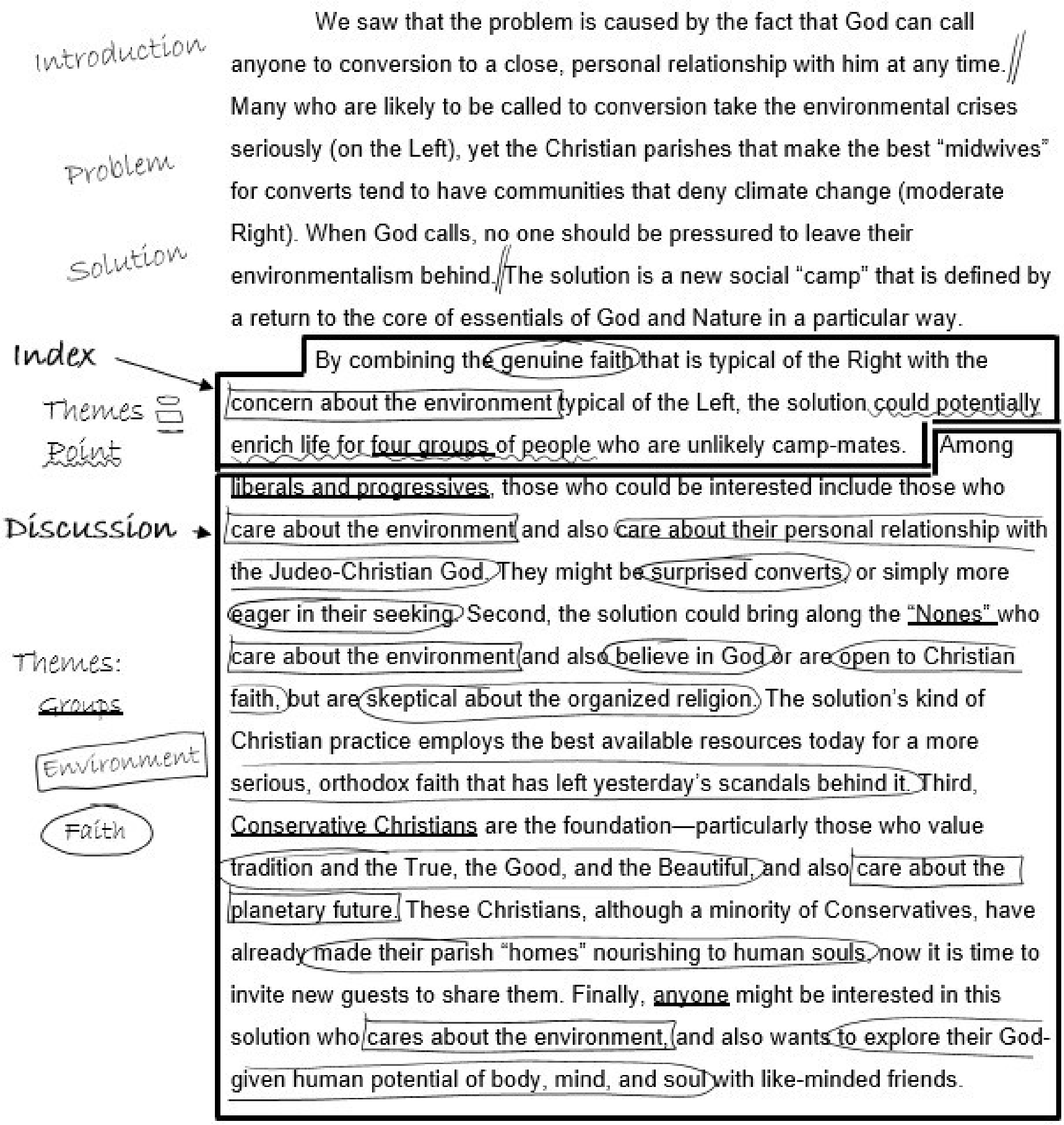
Figure 9. Paragraph of text organized into index (upper) and discussion (lower) sections.



Regardless of the type of opening that is used, near the end of the index position, the writer should plant the key words and concepts that the reader should expect to see in the discussion that follows. These words could be repeated verbatim in the subsequent sentences, or they could indicate themes or concepts that are repeated using related words for added variety. They could be synonyms, antonyms, words that indicate parts of a whole, or stages of a process. All of the key words (and no unannounced key words or themes) should be included in the next four to six sentences of discussion about the information that was introduced in the opening. The discussion sentences are where you present your reasons, evidence, warrants, and respond to your anticipated readers' doubts.

Figure 10 shows an example of a paragraph that is marked up with its index position, point, thematic strings, and discussion. In this example, a social problem has a solution of a "new social 'camp'." The second paragraph introduces a list of four groups of people who could potentially benefit from joining the new camp. Sentence 1 is the index: it provides a road map for the rest of the paragraph by answering the question, "So what?" and offering three phrases that indicate the thematic strings that will be used throughout the discussion. The point, or reason for continuing to read the paragraph is that the writer identifies four groups for whom the proposed solution "could potentially enrich life." The thematic strings are phrases related to Nature or environment, God or faith, and references to the four groups who would be interested in the new social camp. Generalizing from the example to your writing, regardless of the choice of words in the index and discussion, when readers feel that their expectations have been met throughout a paragraph, the text is coherently written.

Figure 10. Paragraph of text with index and discussion sections, thematic strings, and the point.



We saw that the problem is caused by the fact that God can call anyone to conversion to a close, personal relationship with him at any time. Many who are likely to be called to conversion take the environmental crises seriously (on the Left), yet the Christian parishes that make the best "midwives" for converts tend to have communities that deny climate change (moderate Right). When God calls, no one should be pressured to leave their environmentalism behind. The solution is a new social "camp" that is defined by a return to the core of essentials of God and Nature in a particular way.

By combining the genuine faith that is typical of the Right with the concern about the environment typical of the Left, the solution could potentially enrich life for four groups of people who are unlikely camp-mates. Among liberals and progressives, those who could be interested include those who care about the environment and also care about their personal relationship with the Judeo-Christian God. They might be surprised converts or simply more eager in their seeking. Second, the solution could bring along the "Nones" who care about the environment and also believe in God or are open to Christian faith, but are skeptical about the organized religion. The solution's kind of Christian practice employs the best available resources today for a more serious, orthodox faith that has left yesterday's scandals behind it. Third, Conservative Christians are the foundation—particularly those who value tradition and the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, and also care about the planetary future. These Christians, although a minority of Conservatives, have already made their parish "homes" nourishing to human souls, now it is time to invite new guests to share them. Finally, anyone might be interested in this solution who cares about the environment, and also wants to explore their God-given human potential of body, mind, and soul with like-minded friends.

Working with Multi-Paragraph Sections and Larger Units

The paragraph might end with a sentence that states the point. These are more common in paragraphs that introduce and conclude a section than in paragraphs that comprise the body of a section. The point may be stated in the introduction to a section to give readers the purpose for proceeding to read the section. At the conclusion, the point could be an elaborated statement explaining why the section was important to read. In claim-last forms of arguments, the claim and the concluding point could be the same sentence.

All these organizational structures and strategies should be used in multi-paragraph sections of text. A section should open with an index which introduces the key words or themes that set up readers' expectations of the rest of the text. While each paragraph has its opening and key words, sometimes for the sake of readability, long paragraphs (longer than nine sentences) are split into two. In these instances, both use the opening and key words or themes that were introduced at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Figure 10 shows a two-paragraph unit at the beginning of a larger section. The first paragraph, perhaps the opening paragraph of a chapter, introduces the section by stating the problem and its solution. The solution, stated at the end of the introductory paragraph, is the point of the chapter. The second paragraph is the first of several paragraphs or sections that describe the new social "camp." A subheading could be inserted between these paragraphs to indicate the beginning of a section.

Since coherence involves fractal organizational structures, a writer should pay attention to it on all levels of a work, from single paragraph sections to multi-paragraph sections with opening paragraphs, to chapters and a whole book. At each level, a writer should identify, not only the form of argument that she will use for that level, but also the type of opening, key words or themes, words that meet readers' expectations based on the index, and the point. Each level can have a different structure, argumentation strategy and key words. In a large coherent work, all of the lower-level sections should relate back to the higher-level divisions, with key themes and points that can be traced as a sensible outline through the whole. These key themes and points should also be good indicators of the parts of the argument – its claim, grounds, evidence, warrants, problems, solutions, comparisons, and anticipated reader questions and doubts, and responses to them.

Now we can see the sense in which good writing is a work of art. When you deploy these artisan skills well, readers should be able to easily follow your argument and find your writing to be clearly written, meeting the expectations of both their cognitive natures and the expectations which you explicitly set up for them. This increases the likelihood that you will succeed in earning their respect – and perhaps even persuade your most critical readers to accept your most far-fetched claims.

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GLOSSARY

Argument resembles an amiable conversation in which you and imagined readers reason together to solve a problem whose solution they do not yet accept.

Claim is the central statement in an argument, which answers the question, *So what?* and readers could doubt that the sentence is true and the writer responds to that doubt.

Coherence is the organization at the level of paragraphs and sections so that readers encounter the words and concepts that the human mind looks for in the proper order so that readers can easily make sense of the text. It occurs when there is a match between key terms in an index sentence that occurs early in a paragraph and the words and concepts in the rest of the paragraph; it is a fractal property that applies to paragraphs, sections, chapters, books, and every other major division of a written or spoken work.

Discussion is the sentences of a paragraph that follow the index and contain key words and thematic strings that are introduced in the index.

Doubt is a response by readers to a claim and its argument, an essential element of an argument which determines the content and without which there is no argument.

Evidence is tangible support (e.g., archival element, data, statistics) for reasons for a claim, collected from a source external to a writer's mind, and requiring a citation or description of what the writer did to find it.

Failed argument occurs when the writer is not fully aware of the need to engage in argumentation and rather than connecting with readers, talks past them.

Forms of argument differ in the order in which claims, reasons, and warrants and evidence are presented, deployed for strategic purposes for different kinds of audiences, goals, and subject matter for the writer: basic form, claim—warrant—grounds form, claim-last form, and warrant-in-problem form.

Ground is a sufficient reason, explanation, or logical defense, especially one that supports a conclusion or explains a fact, generated by a writer's logic for persuading an audience to accept a claim.

Index is a sentence in an early position within a paragraph or subdivision of text that establishes a reader's expectations of the rest of the textual unit with a set of words that are "indexed" in the reader's mind.

Key word is an important word that conveys significant meaning in a segment of text such that the reader should expect to see it in the index and the discussion that follows.

Objection is a refutation of a statement in an argument, one of several possible responses by readers to an argument for a claim.

Perspective is an alternative point of view that a reader could bring to an argument, using it as the basis for questions, objections, and suggestions, one of several possible responses by readers to an argument for a claim.

Question is a probe for more information or explanation, one of several possible responses by readers to an argument for a claim.

Reason is a sufficient ground of explanation or of logical defense, especially one that supports a conclusion or explains a fact, generated by a writer's own logic for persuading an audience to accept a claim.

Successful argument persuades a particular group of readers to accept a claim; it uses a claim, grounds, evidence, warrants, problems, solutions, comparisons, and anticipated reader questions and doubts, and responses to them, organized so that readers can easily follow the logic.

Thematic string is used like a key word, but is a set of words that indicate a theme or concept that uses related words for added variety, and therefore, may be sprinkled more liberally through a paragraph than a repeated key word. The set could include synonyms, antonyms, what something is and is not, action and opposite action, words that indicate parts of a whole, and stages of a process.

Warrant is an idea that logically links a reason to a claim or evidence to a reason, often from existing knowledge of the world or influential literature in an academic field.

ENSURING THE RIGOUR OF YOUR RESEARCH

Amanda J. Haste (France)

You've probably honed your research and presentation skills through studying for a higher degree, or maybe through your professional life, and now you've researched a topic you're passionate about. You'd like to tell the world about it, so how do you go about disseminating it, and (importantly) how do you evaluate the quality of your research?

In the past, there were only certain means of dissemination: reading your paper at a conference or meeting, and/or publishing it as a book, journal article or tract. Nowadays we can put it online for the world to see, through websites, academic blogs, or on social media … but how do we establish the credibility of our research, and what steps can we take to ensure that it is robust and fit for purpose? This is particularly important for Independent Scholars, as we often don't have a university affiliation and our standing as researchers rests entirely on the quality of our research output.

The main principle behind evaluating research is that of having someone else critically review your work. They should be familiar with your field, and willing to give you feedback that will help you identify any flaws or oversights. In this article I outline the evaluation processes at your disposal, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each, before briefly discussing the review processes involved for journal articles, book publication, and self-publication.

Conference presentations can often give you an opportunity for immediate feedback and suggestions from the audience in the form of the Q&A following your presentation, and over coffee or lunch as you converse with your fellow researchers. This is particularly useful if you are presenting a 'work in progress,' as the feedback can help shape your work by making you aware of related research or even a different approach. A possible drawback here is the public nature of such feedback, and early career researchers may find the idea of the Q&A process stressful. In practice, the audience is generally kind and constructive, especially to young or nervous presenters, and it's important to remember that it's OK to be unable to answer a question. You can't know everything, and useful responses include "that's a very interesting question and I'll certainly look into that aspect" and "I hadn't considered that aspect" (or "I'd considered but rejected that approach…"). Also, if you feel you floundered and embarrassed yourself it's probably not nearly as bad as you thought.

It's important to remember that the audience is generally small – you're not speaking to thousands of people – and most people won't remember for long. Indeed, they're more likely to empathize with you as we've all been there! In general, presenting your research leads to interested comments from your fellow researchers, and their enthusiasm for your research will reassure you of the value of what you are doing.

Peer Review, or refereeing, is a more formal (and usually more private) form of evaluation of your written research. This can take several forms, and the concept is often introduced at postgraduate level[1] in the form of *peer assessment* by which your fellow students will assess each other's work using criteria set out by the course director. This is useful for everyone, as students learn to be objective about others' work, to think critically, and to be aware of the criteria they need to apply to their own work.

Peer review is important because it guards against work being published on a false premise, or using unreliable sources, or drawing unreasonable conclusions. While your paper on the possible origins of one medieval manuscript may not rock the world, we have all witnessed the widespread fallout resulting from faulty scholarship, such as Wakefield's now-discredited research claiming that vaccinations could lead to autism (see Davidson, 2017). Peer review should also guard against plagiarism or duplication (publishing the same research in multiple publications). It will ensure you have expressed your argument clearly, your terminology is precise and correct, and your conclusions are valid and clearly stated, all of which leads to an article of which you can be proud.

TYPES OF PEER REVIEW

There are different types of peer review based on the extent to which the author's and reviewers' identities are known to each other. The most common type is **single-blind review**, in which the names of the reviewers are not known to the author. In **double-blind review**, neither author nor reviewers know each other's identity. In **collaborative review** author and reviewers interact directly, without the mediation of an editor, though the reviewer remains anonymous to the author. **Open review** involves everyone knowing each other's identity, and this is often carried out on a large scale, such as on an online forum.

The pros and cons of each of these are well described by Tegan George (2022) who says that while **single-blind review** "gives the reviewers the ability to give feedback without the possibility of interference from the author, there has been substantial criticism of this method in the last few years" with many arguing that it "can lead to poaching or intellectual theft or that anonymized comments cause reviewers to be too harsh." In theory, **double-blind review** should lead to papers being published on their own merit "rather than on the reputation of the author" (*ibid.*) which is of particular benefit to independent researchers and early career researchers (ECR). However, it is an open secret that a quick internet search using keywords from the manuscript will often reveal the identity of the author, which effectively reduces this to a single-blind process.

Collaborative review is effectively single-blind, but author and reviewer can communicate directly. George outlines the issues here: collaborative review gives "all parties the opportunity to resolve any inconsistencies or contradictions in real time and provides them a rich forum for discussion. It can mitigate the need for multiple rounds of editing and minimize back-and-forth." However, as she points out, "collaborative review can be time- and resource-intensive for the journal" and there needs to be "a set system in place, often a technological platform, with staff monitoring and fixing any bugs or glitches" (*ibid.*).

Open review, which has recently become popular, is a completely transparent process, and while this has the benefit of preventing plagiarism it may also lead to reviewers feeling the need to censor their comments, especially as these may be published along with the final publication. One could also argue that, as the reviewers are self-selected, their knowledge of the field may be limited, not to mention the possibility of offering widely differing opinions. It does happen that, in blind peer review, the reviewers' feedback may be diametrically opposed and in this case it's up to the editor to mediate. However, with open review there is no such mediation so it's up to the author to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Cascade review is when authors "submit their rejected article, along with the peer reviewers' reports, to a second journal" and is practised by some STEM journals (Belcher, 2019, p. 373). This can be useful if your article wasn't a good fit for the original journal. Belcher gives an example of a student's article about an African author being rejected by *PMLA* (the journal of the Modern Languages Association) on the grounds that:

> ...it had never published anything on that author and so wanted its first published piece to be an overview of that author's work. Since the article had been very positively reviewed at *PMLA*, the student wrote to the editor of a related journal, stated what had happened, and asked whether the editor was interested. The editor was, and once the student had submitted the article and reviewers' reports, the article made its way quickly into print at that second journal.

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Evaluating research is based on the principles of critical appraisal, evaluating sources for reliability, replication (repeating a study to test the validity and reliability of the findings), meta-analysis (a statistical method that combines the results of multiple studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular topic), consultation with experts in the field (to identify potential limitations or biases in the study) and examining the funding sources of a study (to identify any potential conflicts of interest or biases that may have influenced the study design or interpretation of results) (Hassan, 2022). However, the assessment criteria and methods will differ depending on your discipline(s), and particularly whether your work is quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative research

The main considerations in evaluating quantitative research are reliability, internal validity and external validity. Internal validity requires that the research measures "what it is supposed to be measuring," while external validity asks whether the results can be "applied to the wider population" (Teesside University, n.d.). The study design and sample type also need to be identified, and measurements shown to be reliable. Although there are several models available to evaluate quantitative research, these can vary widely between disciplines, so you should ensure that your research will stand up to scrutiny within the standard evaluation tools and frameworks in your own field.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research, however, can be altogether more slippery when it comes to applying frameworks, and indeed Karen Lumsden (2022) poses the question "Should we use standardized criteria to evaluate qualitative research?" Lumsden cites a wealth of scholarship in which "many qualitative scholars have proposed frameworks and criteria for assessing qualitative research" while others have argued that "standardized criteria are unhelpful in qualitative inquiry". She cites Altheide and Johnson (2011, p. 582) who argue that:

> "There are many ways to use, practice, promote, and claim qualitative research, and in each there is a proposed or claimed relationship between some field of human experience, a form of representation, and an audience. Researchers and scholars in each of these areas have been grappling with issues of truth, validity, verisimilitude, credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, confirmability, and so on. What is valid for clinical studies or policy studies may not be adequate or relevant for ethnography or autoethnography or performance ethnography."

Again, it's up to you to investigate traditional or emerging evaluation tools in your discipline(s) and, in any case, to inform yourself of the essential criteria by which your work will be assessed.

Lumsden provides a useful comparison table between qualitative and quantitative criteria (Table 1) and elaborates on the qualitative criteria in her article:

Table 1 Lumsden's criteria.

Qualitative criteria	**Quantitative criteria**
Trustworthiness	Rigor
Credibility	Internal validity
Transferability	External validity or generalizability
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Stenfors et al. (2020) cite four criteria for appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative research, together with an important "additional marker of quality", reflexivity (Table 2).

Table 2 Criteria of Stenfors et al.

Criterion	**What it means**	**How to recognise it**
Credibility	The research findings are plausible and trustworthy	There is alignment between theory, research question, data collection, analysis and results. Sampling strategy, the depth and volume of data, and the analytical steps taken, are appropriate within that framework
Dependability	The extent to which the research could be replicated in similar conditions	There is sufficient information provided such that another researcher could follow the same procedural steps, albeit possibly reaching different conclusions
Confirmability	There is a clear link or relationship between the data and the findings	The researchers show how they made their findings through detailed descriptions and the use of quotes
Transferability	Findings may be transferred to another setting, context or group	Detailed description of the context in which the research was performed and how this shaped the findings
Reflexivity	A continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research	Explanations of how reflexivity was embedded and supported in the research process

JOURNALS

Reputable journals use peer review (most often single- or double-blind) to assess the suitability of an article for publication. While each may have a slightly different process it generally unfolds like this:

- author submits manuscript to journal;
- journal assigns editor, who can either reject the manuscript (a "desk reject") or send it on to selected peer reviewers (usually at least two);
- reviewers provide feedback, giving advice on major or minor issues, and giving a decision which are generally to accept for publication with no revisions (very rare), accept with minor revisions, accept with major revisions (also called "revise and resubmit"), or reject;
- author makes any required changes and resubmits the revised paper;
- paper may be sent back to reviewers for approval or another round of reviews (this is usually at the discretion of the editor);
- once accepted the paper can be published.

There are plenty of online resources on the peer review process (e.g. Wiley) but you should always be sure to read the review guidelines carefully for any journal or book publisher with which you are considering publishing.

BOOKS

For book publishers, the same review principles apply, but the process looks more like this:

- author submits book proposal to publisher;
- publisher assigns an editor;
- editor reviews proposal and may suggest revisions;
- editor approves proposal and sends it out for review;
- if reviews are favourable, editor commissions book and a contract is issued, with terms and a submission deadline;
- author submits full book manuscript, which editor sends out for review;
- author carries out any required revisions;
- book moves through to publication.

CONSIDERATIONS

While the peer review process has traditionally been the principal accepted means of establishing credibility, it has received increasing criticism. For example, reviewers are expected to provide this exacting work for free, the idea being that their own work has been reviewed by others so they are just returning the favour. The biggest bugbear here is that while authors provide their work for free, and reviewers are unpaid, the journals themselves often make huge profits, and may even charge the authors to access their own work (Fazackerley, 2023). On the other hand, reviewers for books are paid a set fee by the publisher.

One drawback of peer review is that the thoroughness of the process – and the fact that it relies on scholars' goodwill in fitting reviewing round their busy schedules – may lead to a long lead time for publication. The risk here is that the research is not as current as it was when you submitted it, and there may even have been other research on the topic published in the interim. Danae Perez (2023) discusses this "cumbersome publication process" and the question of individual agendas: "Peer review can only be as good as the people involved" and "Unfortunately, a substantial part of the peer review process is guided by interests that have little to do with scientific research." Indeed, she opines that "If peer review is to persist, it will need profound revisions."

An important issue in a fast-moving world is that, as peer review often insists on situating the research within the current literature, new directions may be stultified, thus putting the brakes on innovation. Perez (2023) notes that some disciplines, especially in technological innovation, are shifting away from peer review, favoring "conference proceedings, which are published immediately after the most important, industry-funded conferences have taken place."

That said, peer-reviewed publications are still the most accepted criterion for academic credibility, and indeed represent a primary consideration for Full Membership of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars.

SELF-PUBLICATION

If you are considering self-publishing your research, you need to consider what you can do to ensure that your work is academically rigorous and therefore has credibility. The Academic's Guide to Self-Publishing website gives an overview of the subject, and points out that as "the lack of academic oversight might prevent many researchers from taking your work seriously" you might "consider paying for a peer review service to show readers how devoted you are to furthering your chosen field." They also recommend crowdsourcing the review process by posting your research on platforms such as ResearchGate or Academia.edu (see above for comments on this type of open peer review).

CONCLUSION

As this discussion has shown, your credibility as a researcher depends on the external validation of your work by your academic peers: whether these comprise your supervisor, friends and colleagues in your field, anonymous peer reviewers, or crowdsourcing reviews, the criteria remain remarkably consistent (even though the terminology may vary). We all have a duty to our readers, whether lay or specialist, to ensure that our research is rigorous and accurate. It's up to you to decide how you will go about achieving this.

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PART 5

HOW TO SURVIVE AS AN INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

THOUGHTS ON GETTING (AND NOT GETTING) GRANTS

Phillip Reid (USA)

I just sent back the proofs for my second book. In the prefaces to both of them, I write that prefaces and acknowledgements are "rather triumphant affairs"; there's a subtext that has nothing to do with the surface tone of humility and gratitude (even though the humility and gratitude are real). By acknowledging our sources of funding, we're parading our accomplishments. By thanking notable scholars for helping us, we're name-dropping. What we don't do, as I point out (and will continue to, so long as editors let me) is list the awards we didn't get, the grants for which we received form e-mails with "your project was not selected for funding" (gotta love that passive voice; how about owning it, and saying "we did not select your project for funding"?)—and the people who either ignored us or told us no.

But that is, of course, the reality of every original scholarly endeavor – at least until you are at a level of accomplishment and prestige that few of us will ever achieve. "Making it" is tough – getting to the point of writing a preface for a published book *should* be a rather triumphant affair. I just hope that not forgetting to pull back the curtain a bit for younger and aspiring scholars who haven't "made it" yet will help to encourage them. I end my prefaces with "The wise scholar … will turn constructive criticism into better work, and rejection into redoubled determination."

And that brings me to the daunting challenge of trying to get grants. I'll say up front that I do not consider myself any sort of an expert on that subject. I have managed to win a few small grants over the past several years – and managed not to win several big ones at the same time – but those few small grants have allowed me to do the work necessary to write two books. I think the realities of the big grants and the small ones are quite different, so I'll address them separately.

Big grants – fellowships, in my case – are living stipends; they award enough money to allow a scholar to work full-time on a project for months at a time without having to worry about an income. It should go without saying that such awards are more than highly competitive, and the success rate for applicants is abysmal. In fact, the only success rate worse than that for applicants is that for non-applicants. You have to apply – and you have to submit the best application you can come up with, accompanied by the strongest letters of recommendation you can wheedle out of people you'd rather not bother – even though you know that your chance of success is tiny. In my case, I'll use the example of the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, which is one of only two U.S. grants I know of that will provide a living stipend for a year to work on a humanities research project not tied to a specific research repository or institute. The success rate hovers around 7%. Even multiple applications for awards like this, year after year, proposing excellent projects, are highly unlikely ever to succeed. Yes, that says something about the priorities of our society, but that is not something we can change – and knowing and accepting what we cannot change is a most important life-skill for an Independent Scholar.

I work in maritime technological history, and I know that something else I cannot change is that my subject is not at all fashionable in my discipline. I know that almost any quality proposal for a project centered around the experience of a group traditionally marginalized by white men, and in histories written by white men, is going to have a serious advantage over mine. There are valid reasons for that, and they are much bigger than I and what I want to do. I apply anyway, but I know that if I am actually going to get my project done, I can't even begin to count on big mainstream grants. I have to look for smaller, specialized sources of funding. Chances of success are much higher there, for those willing to seek them out.

That brings me to smaller grants. These come from specialized-interest organizations. Most of those are organized around a disciplinary interest. I got a generous small grant from, for example, the Early American Industries Association. I've gotten small but essential support from the Society for Nautical Research. NCIS is a little bit different, in that it's organized around a certain type of practitioner, regardless of discipline, but still, you're applying in a much smaller pool, for much less money, and your chances of success are much greater, assuming you meet the eligibility requirements.

So, homework assignment number one for any aspiring Independent Scholar is to learn, thoroughly, what organizations exist in your field that offer any grant support at all, and apply for any of that support for which you are eligible. In a lot of cases, but not all, this will require joining the grantor organization. It's almost surely worth it, in cases where you have reason to think your chances of success will be strong. Make a table or spreadsheet of all the grants you're eligible for, when their deadlines and requirements are, and then – once you've applied – record the notification dates and keep track of responses. The more you apply for, the greater the chance that you'll get enough yeses to proceed with your project.

At the same time, though, you'll guarantee the receipt of more rejections. I'd like to write here that those become innocuous, just water off a duck's back, but they don't. They're yucky the first time and the twelfth time. I know now that they always will be. I suppose the difference is that I've become accustomed to them, but then again, we humans can become accustomed to just about any unpleasantness if we experience it routinely enough, for better or worse. I do think it is worth taking seriously, though, the importance of some active mental-health tactics for anyone doing this stuff.

Basically, that means keeping in clear focus what you can't know and can't control. Whether we're talking about an admissions committee, a grant committee, or a hiring committee, that committee is a black box. You don't know what's in it, and you never will. You can drive yourself crazy trying to peer into it, and your energy would be far better spent elsewhere. I said I know what the general bias in my discipline is these days, and I do, but I don't know the specific preferences and interests of the members of any specific committee, and those preferences and interests will, for the most part, decide who gets funded and who doesn't. I don't know who else applied, and how well their applications mesh with the biases of the committee members. None of this is even worth speculating about. Here's what I can control:

I can pay the most careful attention to the stated criteria in the application instructions, and take those criteria at face value, rather than go down a rabbit hole of trying to "read between the lines." If the grantor doesn't know how to write clear criteria, or doesn't abide by them very closely in their decision-making process, then no clairvoyant reading of the criteria is going to help me with that anyway. I read the criteria, and I make sure my project does not contradict any of them, and that I follow any and all instructions on eligibility and application components to the letter. That sounds obvious, but from what I understand, too many applicants fail to meet even this basic standard.

I can use my best wordsmithing to craft a narrative or proposal that checks all the boxes in the instructions, and that presents my proposal in clear, plain language for the general well-educated reader, proofed and proofed again. A proper grant application does not contain even a whiff of jargon and no typos.

And speaking of whiffs: don't overstate your case. (This applies equally well to academic monographs.) I'm not going to win a Nobel Prize for writing a book about schooners, and I won't be arguing that I should. I can explain why my project is worthwhile without insinuating that is going to cause a revolution. A proper application should never contain even a whiff of male bovine excrement. At least someone on the committee will have a discerning nose. If you shoot the moon, you'll just hit your foot.

Finally, relax and accept. It's easy to acquire the impression, by perusing blogs and grantor websites and attending well-meaning Zoom sessions on how to write grant apps, that there must be some special secret little tricks that make the difference between success and disappointment. I could not be more skeptical about that. That's not to say that such aids can't be helpful – they can be. But they should all be taken with the same grain of salt – that, in the end, you're still sending your application to a black box. What you can do is what I wrote above. The rest of it is out of your hands.

I'll leave you with this, for perspective. I know a scholar, whom I met at a conference (always go to conferences, if you can swing it; they make the real things happen), who was kind enough to write me a couple of rec letters. Her CV looks like the CV you and I would make if we got drunk and decided to write the most outrageous fake academic CV possible. She's won everything. (That you can win, that is; there's no Nobel Prize for History.) She told me, though, that under each yes letter she gets is a stack of no letters. If a MacArthur Fellow says that, then there you have it. Persistence and consistent quality are the "secret tricks." Good luck. (And luck – definitely luck.)

THE VALUE OF INDEPENDENT RESEARCH: MAKING A LIVING AS AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

Helen Kara (UNITED KINGDOM)

INTRODUCTION

Independent research and/or independent scholarship is a great way to earn a living, and independent researchers and scholars have a lot to offer to universities and other organisations. Before I explain these assertions, I will define the terms 'Independent Researcher' and 'Independent Scholar'. For me, an independent researcher is a researcher who is not employed by a research-active organisation, and an Independent Scholar is someone who does academic work outside the academy.

I have been a self-employed independent researcher for 25 years and an Independent Scholar for 12 years. I have never held a university position – indeed I have never wanted one, though I did apply for a few part-time positions during the UK recession in 2011 when I was desperately applying for part-time jobs in several sectors. (In the end I got a part-time job with a charity for a couple of years to make ends meet and help me keep my business going during that difficult time.)

I do commissioned research, mostly for non-academic clients, so they decide on the research topic and question(s). A sizeable proportion of the research I do is evaluation research, and some is more 'academic-style' knowledge-gathering research. When I started work as an independent researcher in 1999 it was quite rare for UK university departments to take on commissioned research, but now it's much more common. So I have more competitors, but on the plus side, I can make a good living from projects that are a sensible size for me to take on but too small to be worth the bother for a university department. Also people in academic positions sometimes ask me to join their research project teams.

Another difference is that, as an independent researcher in the UK, I can't apply for any of the research funding distributed by the Government to academic researchers. I can be part of a team applying for such funding, but that team must be led by someone in a university position. There are a few small pots I can apply to which are set up and managed by independent grant funders. However, with the increasing casualization of academia, plus other politico-socio-economic factors in play, more and more people in the UK are becoming independent researchers (and I know in other countries too). Also, indies can do a lot with a little: our overheads are very low, and we are agile and responsive. So this looks to me like a waste of a national resource.

Maybe you are considering – or have begun – working as an independent researcher or scholar. Perhaps you could benefit from working with an independent researcher or scholar. Either way, this chapter has useful information for you, because I discuss how I charge for work, how much I earn from the books I write, and why and how to negotiate with academic publishers. I conclude with my 10 top tips for making a living from independent research.

HOW I CHARGE FOR WORK

Although I can't tell you how much *you* should charge for any work you're being asked to do, I hope that by explaining how I work out my charges – a system developed over many years in business – I can at least give you some pointers on how to think about charging, and what kinds of questions to ask yourself and others.

First, I charge by the day (or, at the minimum, half a day). My rates depend on: the type of client and/or source of funding; the complexity, location, and interestingness of the work; and (to some extent) my capacity. For example, if I don't have much on and I could do with the work, I'm more likely to accept less interesting work at a lower fee; conversely, if I'm maxed out, it doesn't matter how interesting or well-paid a gig might be, I'm not going to say yes.

As a rule of thumb, I charge more for more complex work, work that involves more travelling, and boring work. If there's something interesting I can do in my office, I'll be happy to charge less. I often reduce my day rate somewhat for a longer piece of work, on the basis that if a client buys, say, 20 days of my time or more at one go, they deserve a discount. Sometimes the client sets the day rate: if that's higher than I would set it myself, I won't argue; if it's lower, I probably will (unless there's some other reason I want to do the work).

In terms of client type, I charge the least to small, local charities, or for any work funded by public donations. I charge the most to national governments, or for work funded by national governments, and to wealthy organisations such as universities. Larger charities and local governments get charged at an intermediate level.

In terms of what my day rate actually is: for UK work, it currently varies between £120 (small local charity, work funded from public donations) and £1,000. I charge £1,000 for a day's teaching in UK universities, which seems to be pretty much the going rate; £600-£750 to central government or for work funded by central government; £500-£700 to larger charities and funders; and £250-£450 to smaller charities and funders. This sounds like a lot to some people, but it is important to remember that I don't earn these rates every day, or even most days. A lot of my working hours are for unpaid tasks: business administration, writing books, the endless emails, pre-contract work, my own professional development, and so on. Also I don't get holiday pay or sick pay or any other benefits such as a workplace pension or health insurance. The annual turnover of my business varies, but is usually around £50-£60,000. Turnover is not profit; usually I can pay myself around £25-£30,000 per year, which is enough for my own moderate lifestyle, but is not exactly megabucks.

The other part of the equation is working out what you can actually do in a day. This takes some experience, as everyone works at different rates, and the time things take can vary. For example, not all interviews will take the same length of time: an interview with five questions is likely to take less time, on average, than one with 15 questions. Sometimes, too, there's a chunk of the work where you need to invest some time updating your knowledge and/or skills. I don't think it's fair to charge a client for the time you spend doing this, because the update will only help them for this particular job, while it will help you more widely. Occasionally the two will combine, e.g. when a client wants a literature review, as part of the work, about the exact topic on which you need to update your knowledge to do the whole job effectively. That kind of serendipity does happen, but it's rare.

I can't tell you what you can do in a day, but I can tell you it will help if you are able to work fast, as then your work will represent better value for money. I touch-type at 90 wpm, I read fast, and I make good use of time. All of this means I can offer my clients a lot of work in each day.

I charge for some expenses on top of my day rate: travel (second-class, taxis where necessary, mileage at Inland Revenue rates if I need to drive) and accommodation when required. I don't generally charge subsistence to clients, but I do write it off against tax. I absorb all other expenses – stationery, printing etc – within my day rate.

Some clients want a 'job rate' so they can budget – or they tell you what their budget is, and ask you to work out how you can do the job within the available resources. Either way, you have to decide whether and, if so, how you can meet their needs. Sometimes you simply can't: I've lost count of the jobs I've turned down because the client wants, say, a three-year evaluation of a publicly funded project for a total budget of £5,000. It's just not feasible to do a good piece of work, of that duration, for that price. Charging for work abroad is different, because it depends on the going rate in the country concerned. This is usually less than in the UK, though sometimes it is more. Also you should charge half your day rate for travelling time, and make sure any costs you quote include any taxes and/or visa costs that will be payable locally.

People may, at times, ask you to work for nothing, or for 'exposure' or 'the experience' or 'the contacts'. It is up to you whether or not you take up these opportunities. If you're at the very start of your indie career, some may be worth the effort; I benefited from such things myself. I still work for nothing at times: I offer free support to groups of service users, community members, activists etc who want help and advice in relation to research. But I'm long past the point of working for 'exposure' or 'experience'. I doubt any of my clients would ask a plumber or a window cleaner to work in return for 'exposure', so why do they feel it's OK to ask a researcher to do this? Beats me. And I already have many years of paid experience, so I hardly need more unpaid experience.

Whatever you decide, don't sell yourself short. We all need to value our own knowledge, experience, and skills. This isn't always easy: the day rates I now charge are this year's rates, and it took me a while to reach this point. I could only bring myself to charge these rates after, quite literally, years of people I respect (including several clients) telling me I wasn't charging enough for the work I was doing. Yet I now realise that under-selling myself didn't do me any good, and it doesn't do the rest of us any good either, because it can lead clients to have unrealistic expectations. So do the necessary thinking and research, take a deep breath, and charge what your work is worth.

MAKING MONEY FROM WRITING BOOKS

I have been writing steadily since 2011, and my first research methods book was published in 2012. Over the next 10 years I published three full-length books (one in 2018) and two second editions (in 2017 and 2020) for my main publisher. I also co-edited three rapidly published e-books and one conventionally published book. I co-wrote a book for another publisher, to be part of a series I co-edit, and wrote four very short methods books for a third publisher. I have received several small advances for these more recent books. When I say 'small', I mean between £125 and £500, so nice to have in the bank but not at all representative of the amount of time I spend writing the books.

Publishers can be a bit funny about authors telling people about royalty rates. This kind of secrecy benefits corporations not individuals, but still, that's where we are right now, which is why I'm giving you ranges, not exact amounts. Standard academic royalties on all of my contracts across four publishers range from 2.5% for hardbacks to 12% for e-books. Royalties for subsidiary rights, such as translations and audiobooks, can be higher, but to date none of my books have been translated or produced in other formats. At times I have been able to negotiate higher rates for a 'riser' (more on these in the next section) though, I suspect, only when the publisher thinks the book will never sell enough copies to require such a payout!

I have also self-published six solo-authored short books for doctoral students, now in their second editions, and one co-written book on self-publishing for academics. These would sell more if I did more to promote them; annual global profits are around £150. I get money, too, from the Public Lending Right – every time one of my books is borrowed from a UK public library, I am entitled to a payment of a few pence. Sadly PLR does not include academic libraries. Some years I get no PLR payment, and when I do get a payment it is usually under £10.

However, the completely wonderful Author's Licensing and Collecting Society pays out twice a year to UK authors whose work has been photocopied anywhere in the world. They also collect PLR payments from outside the UK. That usually yields a few hundred pounds which is always very nice to receive.

With all of this, my total gross income directly from writing in 2021-22 was £5,993.61. There were some outgoings too: mostly books, and my Society of Authors' annual subscription, which brought it down to around £5,000 of net income. However, this was a bumper year, due to pandemic-fuelled e-book buying. At the time of writing, I don't yet have my figures for 2022-23, but they are likely to be much closer to my 2020-21 total gross income which was £3,407.20. I don't get anywhere near the average income from book sales for an author in the UK. The latest survey, from 2022, found that the average was £7,000; down from around £10,500 when the survey was last conducted in 2018[1]. I dream of my royalties hitting five figures, but I don't know if that will ever happen.

I love writing books; I don't think I could write them otherwise. Also, my books make me money in other ways: I get asked to teach in universities, keynote conferences, and work on projects, solely on the strength of my writing. But I think it is worth reflecting on how poorly academic writing pays writers. We're still dealing with a system which is based on the principle that anyone doing academic writing has a secure and sizeable salary. That is outdated but it's taking a long time to change.

WHY AND HOW TO NEGOTIATE WITH ACADEMIC BOOK PUBLISHERS

The academics I have met who write books seem to assume one of two things. The first assumption is that publishers are doing authors a favour by publishing their books. The second is that the royalties offered are a set figure. Both of these assumptions are wrong.

I suspect the first assumption exists because academics need publications so badly that when someone agrees to publish their work it can feel like a massive relief and a cause for celebration. Yet publishers would not exist without authors. Nevertheless, publishers are hard-headed business people, and they are not going to publish a book if they don't think it will turn a profit.

The second assumption may exist because we live in a society of set prices in shops, set salaries and fees for work, and so on. The notion of haggling is unfamiliar. So you need to know that the royalties a publisher proposes to give you are generally a starting point for negotiations rather than a fixed offer. In a moment I'll give you some pointers on how to handle these negotiations, but first let's look at why it is important to negotiate.

Publishers often belong to parent companies that are very, very rich. For example, the company Informa plc has four operating divisions: business intelligence, academic publishing, knowledge, and events. Its academic publishing division covers the humanities, social sciences, and STEM subjects, and includes publishers such as Taylor & Francis, Psychology Press, Cogent OA, and Routledge. In 2022 this division

[1] https://www.create.ac.uk/blog/2022/12/07/uk-authors-earnings-and-contracts-2022-a-survey-of-60000-writers/ (viewed 23.11.23)

made an adjusted operating profit of £207.1 million[2]. Informa as a whole made an adjusted operating profit of £496.3 million[3]. So academic publishing, one of Informa's four operating divisions, makes 42% of its profit.

Here's another example. The RELX Group plc is 'a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers'[4] across industries. This company includes the publisher Elsevier, which primarily publishes academic books in STEM subjects, as one of its four divisions. In 2022 Elsevier made an adjusted operating profit of £1,100 million[5]. The RELX Group as a whole made an adjusted operating profit of £4,026 million[6].

It is evident that academic publishing is very, very profitable for these companies, and their shareholders. Yet authors, who may work for years on a single book, are to be content with royalties of a few hundred pounds a year – or less?

One reason this power imbalance hasn't been important before now is that most, if not all, academic authors used to be in permanent academic roles with more than adequate salaries and time to write books within their day jobs. Yet, as we know, these days more and more academics are in casual and precarious roles, and have to write books in their own time. Even those with permanent jobs are often so over-worked that they, too, have to write their books outside working hours. Also, some people writing scholarly books are not in any academic role, but are independent researchers, unemployed, retired and so on.

Authors are contractually prevented from discussing their own royalty rates. However, I can tell you that the Textbook and Academic Authors Association conducted an anonymous survey of academic authors in 2015. They found that average royalties for print books ranged from 9–14%, and the highest royalty reported was 30%. I can also tell you that, in the UK, academic writers earn the lowest annual averages from their books of any type of writer.

Clearly publishers do need to earn money from the books they publish, to pay for their staff, buildings, printing, marketing, and all the other costs associated with their business. They also need to make a profit (or, if they're not-for-profit, a surplus) to reinvest in their business and, if a plc, pay dividends to their shareholders. However, do they really need profits of hundreds of millions of pounds, from the often unpaid work of academic authors?

I believe we should be negotiating harder for higher royalties on our scholarly books. I have done this myself, successfully, with different types of publisher. Here are some tips. First, forget about feelings such as gratitude or repulsion, and treat the deal as a business transaction. Position the conversation as a business deal by saying something like, 'As we haven't done business together before...' Second, ask for more than you think they will agree to. There's a chance they might say yes, and if not you are leaving space for them to make a counter-offer lower than your request but still considerably better than the original offer.

The publisher is likely to specify separate royalty rates for hardbacks, paperbacks, and e-books. You can negotiate really hard on e-book royalties. Publishers' costs for e-book production and handling are much lower than for print books. They don't have to pay for paper, printing, storage, shipping, or returns. Also, they don't sell as many e-books as print books. This means they can give more here.

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[2] Informa Annual Report 2022, p 179
[3] Informa Annual Report 2022, p 56
[4] RELX Annual Report 2022, p 0
[5] RELX Annual Report 2022, p 18
[6] RELX Annual Report 2022, p 215

If you get stuck on a figure that doesn't seem enough to you but the publisher won't budge, you can ask for a 'riser'. That means after, say, 1,000 copies have been sold in that format, your royalty will go up by a few percentage points. This is often easier for publishers to say yes to because if they sell 1,000 copies, they have already recouped most, all, or more of their investment in your work, so then they can afford to pay a higher royalty. It's probably not worth asking for a riser for hardbacks, as they don't sell many copies, but it is well worth giving it a go for paperbacks, especially if you're writing a book that is likely to have a wide readership.

Occasionally an academic publisher will offer a small 'advance' of a few hundred pounds. This is not an extra advance payment, it is an advance on royalties which the publisher will claw back from your royalties until it has been fully repaid. If a few hundred pounds would make a real difference to your work for the book – enable you to buy other books, for example, or to travel for meetings or to interview people – then by all means accept. But do be aware that it's not extra money, they're simply rearranging the offer.

Bear in mind that the person you are negotiating with, usually your commissioning editor, will not have the power to make the final decision. Keep your relationship with them as cordial and professional as possible, and make your case as clearly and concisely as you can, because you need them to advocate for you within their organisation.

In many ways this is the simple part of the negotiations. Once you agree the royalty figures, the publisher will issue a draft contract. It is a really good idea to get independent professional advice on the contract, because it will be hard to understand its implications unless you have specific legal expertise. You can join the Society of Authors as soon as you have a draft contract, and specialist vetting of that and any other contract you receive is included in your membership fee. They will tell you which points to negotiate on, and how. The Society of Authors is based in the UK. They are open to members from anywhere in the world, but their advice and activities have a UK focus and so may be less relevant for members from other countries.

Does all this negotiation sound icky to you? Get over it. You are going to work really hard on writing your books. It makes sense to do all you can to make your books work as hard as possible for you.

MY 10 TOP TIPS[7]

So, now you've seen the reality of earning a living at this, here are my ten top tips for independent researchers and scholars:

1. **Be able and willing to live on less money than your employed contemporaries.** The day rates can be high but you won't get paid work every day, and some weeks or months you will have no paid work at all. There are no benefits such as holiday pay, sick pay or pensions, so you need to earn enough to cover those. If you crave luxury, the indie lifestyle is not for you.
2. **Be highly motivated.** Much of the time there is nothing to make you get out of bed but your own free will. Some people think that all there is to independent work is highly paid jobs for clients and a lot of time off. This is far from the case. You also have to run your own business, which means accounts, marketing, sorting out your own continuing professional development, and so on.

[7] First published on The Auditorium blog 26 Sept. 2023 and adapted for publication in this book.

3. **Be very well organised.** Sometimes you will have several client projects running at the same time, and you will need to stay on top of each one, plus the needs of your own business.
4. **Be reliable.** Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it. If you encounter a problem that could affect others, let them know as soon as possible. Don't take on work you might not be able to complete.
5. **Networking is essential.** You won't have colleagues down the corridor who you can wander along to see for a chat when there's something on your mind. At times you'll need help and without a network you may have nobody to ask. Network online as well as offline.
6. **Keep up to date with developments in your field.** Sign up for as much relevant free information as you can, decide what of the rest is worth paying for, and make time to read it all.
7. **Use your time productively.** The workload is lumpy and sometimes you will have to work long hours. Try to keep those times to a minimum. When necessary, schedule routine work for when you're more tired.
8. **Look after your health.** This is a huge priority when you have no sick pay. Eat sensibly, get enough rest, take exercise, have holidays. And be prepared to drag yourself out to work in physical and emotional states that would have an employed person reaching for the self-certification form.
9. **Think at least twice before accepting unpaid work.** Time is your most valuable asset. People will ask you to do all sorts of things for free – even governments will – and you need to be sure that whatever you do can also benefit you in some way, and won't take up too much of your precious time.
10. **Write for publication**. Published writing looks great on your CV and is a marketing asset. What you write, and for whom, and where you publish that work, is for you to decide. Make it professionally relevant, write it well, and then promote it as widely as you can.

HOW INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS CAN BE USEFUL

If you are an employed researcher or scholar, you may find that independent researchers and scholars can be useful to you. There are three main ways independent researchers and scholars can help:

As part of a team e.g. on a funded research project. Allocating time and costs for an indie within a funding bid shows that you are thinking beyond the walls of your organisation and taking a creative approach to the work. Indies have high day rates, but funders are used to these. You can cost in a very small amount of time: I am currently working as methods/ethics adviser on one funded longitudinal research project and my allocation is 12 hours per year.

To augment your teaching programme. Indie researchers and scholars can be useful for all sorts of teaching, from a single seminar or a one-day course to a whole module or doctoral supervision. Postgraduate researchers and research staff value the perspective of independent researchers and scholars who often bring practitioner experience and/or real-world research expertise.

When you have capacity problems. If a key person gets a job elsewhere or goes on maternity leave when you're in mid-project, you may need good quality help at short notice. It makes sense to get to know your local indies, and/or the indies in your field, because one of them may have the necessary skills and capacity.

Another good reason for getting to know independent researchers and scholars is that you will find out who you can trust. As with employees, some are more skilful, knowledgeable, productive and reliable than others. Also, if an indie hasn't been independent for long, it is worth asking them about their intentions. In these precarious times, some people set up as indies in the hope of earning a little money while they look for full-time employment. It won't help you if the independent researcher or scholar you have come to rely on gets a job and leaves you high and dry. Mostly, though, independent researchers and scholars are flexible, thoughtful, and bring a fresh perspective. We are less constrained by bureaucracy, so have more time to think.

I love my wonderful clients and collaborators and the autonomy of my independent research life. I hope you love yours, too.

STAYING WELL:
SELF-CARE FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCHERS

Amanda J. Haste (FRANCE)
& Linda Baines (UNITED KINGDOM)

Content warning *For those of a sensitive academic disposition, this chapter only contains few references, academic or otherwise. The aim of this chapter is to offer some practical suggestions and ideas on self-care for independent scholars. This is why we do not delve into the details of the extensive research on self-care, although you will find plenty of useful references in the bibliography.*

Thank you *to those independent researchers who responded to our invitation to share their ideas of self-care, and to Keren Epstein-Gilboa for her insightful suggestions which have improved this chapter immensely.*

INTRODUCTION

As independent scholars we may be juggling our research with the demands of paid work, family, and caring commitments. The result is that, all too often, looking after ourselves slips well down the list of priorities. However, self-care is not an optional add-on, to be considered only if we have some spare time in which to indulge ourselves, but should be an integral part of our lives. In this chapter, we firstly consider what we mean by self-care, and its relationship to our research, and examine the effect on our wellbeing of actually doing research, especially with emotionally difficult topics. We then explore the areas in which we need to be aware of our own physical, mental, emotional (and spiritual) wellbeing in our daily lives beyond our research. In both these areas, we suggest practical strategies from both the literature on researcher wellbeing and from the experiences of other independent scholars.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'SELF-CARE'?

We do see 'self-care' mentioned, particularly in books and articles about mental and physical health (Seal, 2023) although it is rarely mentioned in academia and some clinical fields. Scholars who have published specifically on self-care for academics include notably Petra Boynton (2017, 2021), Helen Kara (2018, 2022) and Mallon (2024). Systematic reviews of the literature on self-care also exist, such as those by Godfrey et al. (2010) and Riegal et al. (2021).

'Self-care' seems to be one of those expressions or terms that can have varied meanings, and mean different things to different people. One definition could be ''Self-care is a broad term for anything we do for ourselves solely for the purpose of looking after our body or minds. It means looking after yourself physically, emotionally and socially" (BBC, 2021). We can also look at 'self-care' from a different perspective: *One of the best ways to start thinking about self-care is to think about the words literally, because in essence self-care is about thinking about and taking care of the 'self', in other words taking care of you!* (Mallon, 2024).

Putting yourself and your own needs first is something we may have been raised or taught to think of as something we shouldn't do. Self-care can therefore be seen as being selfish, as a luxury or indulging yourself (BBC, 2021). On the other hand, the Dalai Lama calls it 'wise selfishness' and we can also call it 'enlightened self-interest' rather than selfish (Seal, 2023). You may remember a key instruction in the safety training you are meant to watch before a plane takes off: 'Put your own oxygen mask on first before you help others'. While this may not be true for everyone, many of us find the need to express our needs and priorities, to respect ourselves and our own needs and set healthy boundaries, and that if we don't look after ourselves we can't function at our best and are unable to support and care for others or do our best work.

SELF-CARE AND RESEARCH

Some of us can find can working in academia to be overwhelming, that the work and the stress are constant (Ross et al., 2023). On the other hand if you have chosen to step outside academia and become an independent scholar, you may enjoy doing your research and, for some people, research can be one of the main or core parts of our lives; it is part of who we are.. If it is, it's important that we develop a healthy relationship with it, that we define boundaries and, if we want to, that we have the freedom to pursue other interests, other relationships, and to spend some of our time on these as well as on our research.

Our research can be intoxicating, fascinating, exciting and all-consuming, frustrating or overwhelming. When we first find a new topic, when our interest is sparked, it can be like falling in love. We may want to find out as much as possible about it, to read everything we can find about it. We may want to explore the ins and outs of the topic, work out its scope and parameters, and to identify the key themes, the main authors and how the topic has evolved. We may find a gap in the literature, or we may come up with some new questions, or find ways to theorise about the topic. We can then decide to go further: we decide to explore the topic in more depth by undertaking research on the issue. At this stage we may decide to commit to exploring and working on the topic for a sustained period; we're still inspired, and we're still excited by what we are doing.

However, like most relationships, day-to-day realities and practicalities start to creep in; research can become mundane, boring and repetitive (Boynton, 2017, p.108). For example, tasks such as trying to recruit and contact potential participants, collecting and recording references, preparing data, aspects of data analysis can be tedious; yet, they are necessary if you are to produce meaningful research, and to achieve your research aim and objectives. Research can be frustrating and exhausting; gathering data can be demanding and challenging (Boynton, 2017).

So how can you keep the spark or the interest in your relationship with your research? By practising self-care. Here in this chapter we explore possible ways in which you can do this.

Another aspect to consider is that you cannot physically work on your research 24 hours a day. Some of us find that stepping away from it and practising self-care can actually help your research. Your brain does not actually stop working on your research while you are doing something else; it continues to work on it at a subconscious level. Turning to other activities, to resting, socialising, going for a walk can actually be good for your research. It can give your brain space to work on issues and challenges, and to come up with ideas and possible answers to some of those questions you have been wrestling with.

Remember the times that an idea has popped into your head when you are having a shower, or in the small hours of the morning or when you are away from your desk, or on holiday. In other words, practising self-care creates a space for creativity, to make connections and for ideas to surface. As well as giving yourself time to rest, stepping away from your research can bring fresh perspectives, new ideas and different ways of seeing things; it can recharge and refresh you, inspire and re-energise you, and persuade you to keep going.

SELF-CARE WHEN STUDYING SENSITIVE ISSUES

> If we are going to study real life, we can't help discovering the dark side of human existence. Listening to heart-wrenching stories. Looking at images that depict pain, sadness, displacement. Reading accounts of suffering, or analyzing responses to surveys that demonstrate the impact of natural or man-made disasters. They can stick in our minds and hearts, and make it hard to keep going. The ability to practice self-care is an essential research skill! (Sage Methodspace, n.d.)

While this may not apply to all researchers, it is a real issue for those of us who use ethnographic methods, interviewing (or even living alongside) those whose lives and experiences we are researching. It can also be an issue when using historical sources which can provide graphic instances of, for example, the accounts of enslaved people being torn from their homes and families and transported to a distant land, or narratives regarding war, forced migration, imprisonment, and other hardships. Sage Methodspace (n.d.) provides some useful open-access articles on researcher wellbeing in areas such as closure of prison relationships in ethnographic research (Abbot & Scott, 2019), methodological considerations for the special-risk researcher (Alberro, 2019), and the mental health of people doing qualitative research (Clark & Sousa, 2018). In this section we draw heavily (and unapologetically) from the excellent work of Kara (2018; 2022) and Boynton (2017; 2021) to discuss physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and relational wellbeing for independent researchers. The research of Smith, Pooley et al (2023) also explores exposure to "vicarious trauma" (VT) "in qualitative researchers who study traumatised populations" and identifies "potential protective strategies for reducing the risk of VT".

Kara reminds us that there are "few ethical codes or guidelines" for researcher wellbeing, and that research ethics committees (RECs) and institutional review boards (IRBs) are "mostly concerned with the physical safety of researchers, rather than taking a more holistic approach" (Kara, 2018, p.161). She therefore outlines the "real emotional risks to researchers" (Kara, 2018, p.161) especially in qualitative research, and mentions Velardo & Elliott who tackle this issue from the beginning of the research journey in "Prioritising doctoral students' wellbeing in qualitative research" (2018).

Physical wellbeing

> The part of research that may hold the most risks to physical safety is the data-gathering stage [...]. Collecting survey responses on an iPad in a public space is fairly low risk, while conducting interviews in participants' homes may be higher risk. Doing ethnography in prisons, or restless urban areas, or with extreme sportspeople, may be higher risk still (Kara, 2018, p.162).

As independent scholars we are working outside the safety net of institutional procedures (if indeed any such procedures exist) so the onus is on us to ensure our own physical safety. Your decisions should be based "on evidence, rather than stereotypes or suppositions" (Boynton, 2017, p.170) and should be built into your research plan.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork can present particular challenges, especially for women or those with disabilities, as Boynton (2024) explains:

> Years ago, when I first started offering training on researcher safety and wellbeing I mentioned toilet breaks. Discussions on this also included managing periods while during fieldwork and on placement. Through to those needing speedy access for bladder/bowel emergencies; for parents/carers; who were using wheelchairs or walking aids; and anyone who used diapers, pads, stoma bags, or catheters and needed accessible, private facilities.
>
> This is a more complex issue than one might think if toilets are unsafe, unsanitary, or unavailable. And yes, they are absolutely an EDI issue, they're also a rights, justice and safety issue.

Boynton (2021, pp.100, 106) touches on this aspect, but her LinkedIn post (Boynton 2024) links to an excellent article by Freda Kreier (January 2024) which tackles this issue in depth.

Working in people's homes

However, we don't have to be conducting fieldwork in the Amazon rainforest to be putting ourselves at physical risk – even working in people's homes can present dangers. Bahn and Weatherill (2013) developed a 7-point checklist for researchers working in people's houses, "where there may be aggressive pets, or loose rugs or toys on the floor to trip over" (Kara, 2018, p.163):

1. Has a mobile phone call-in system been established?
2. Is the researcher experienced in working with these types of participants?
3. Can researchers work in pairs?
4. If data is to be gathered in participants' homes, are other colleagues aware of researchers' whereabouts, and can researchers plan an exit strategy, for example parking in the street for a quick getaway?
5. Is debriefing support or counselling available?
6. What types of safety training are needed? (Bahn and Weatherill, 2012, p.33)

Boynton (2017, pp. 179-81) provides a more comprehensive checklist, and it is well worth considering such templates when planning for your physical safety.

Emotional wellbeing

There are many aspects of doing research that carry an emotional burden, even the administrative tasks such as "applying for ethical approval or preparing and coding data," and data-gathering can also be "emotionally demanding" (Kara, 2018, p.164).

> *Again, from the researcher's point of view, the continued exposure to very distressing material when you're analysing and report-writing can have an impact, so we all have a responsibility to try and safeguard against that.* (Interviewee, cited in Kara, 2018, p.164).

The literature on researcher wellbeing refers to management strategies, of which those that apply to independent scholars are "advance preparation, peer support, [...] seeking counselling, and making sure you have time off" (Kara, 2018, pp.164-5, drawn from Moncur, 2013, p.1885 and Boynton, 2017, pp.182

and 193). There is absolutely no shame in seeking counselling or another talking therapy, and Phillip Reid provides some practical advice and useful suggestions for some of the issues you might want to talk about:

> *[Choose] a respected clinic with a sliding-scale fee structure if you don't have good insurance. What to talk about: The fear and insecurity, the frustration with lack of income, the feelings of failure and marginalization and insignificance. The disconnect between your talent and the lack of value the world grants to that.*

Mental wellbeing

Dealing with feedback

Our mental (and emotional) wellbeing can be impacted in several ways during the research process, not least through having to deal with and respond to feedback on our work. We are often so involved in and passionate about our research that any negativity can feel like a personal attack. As Kara says, "even when feedback is fair, balanced and constructive, it can also be disheartening, demoralising, even depressing." Belcher offers some excellent advice for mitigating this.

> When you see a new message in your email in-box from a journal to which you've submitted your work, I recommend that you avoid opening it if you're on your way to class or a meeting. Try to save the mail for when you have the time to emotionally absorb its contents on your own. If reading the body of the email is unavoidable, wait to read the reviewers' reports, which often come as attachments, until you have some real time. Even positive decisions usually arrive with critical comments, so it's better to wait until you have the emotional space to cope (Belcher, 2019, p.361).

Belcher goes on to give an exhaustive account of the various possible decisions and how to respond to each of them (Belcher, 2019, pp.361-77) which is well worth reading (see also chapter 4.5 on Ensuring the rigour of your research) but here we will give Kara's brief threefold process for managing the emotional impact:

1. Give yourself time to digest and understand the feedback.
2. Remember that it is human nature to hear the negatives much more loudly than the positives [...] and work to counteract that.
3. Consider the extent to which feedback can help you to improve your work (Kara, 2018, p.165).

Reviewing other researchers' work

Being asked to give feedback on other researchers' work can also be stressful, but if you ensure that your feedback is constructive rather than negative this will be less stressful for you, and more helpful to the recipient. A 'praise sandwich' is always a good formula. For instance "this is an important/strong/useful contribution to the literature (or "I enjoyed reading it") ... but it could be improved by....finishing with some encouraging words, such as "I look forward to seeing the revised version.... This is altogether kinder than slamming straight into "What's wrong with this paper is....". Your feedback should focus on "the quality and rigour of the work" you receive (Hames (2013, p.7). It's not your job "to extend the work beyond its current scope" and you should honour the author's intentions rather than trying to transform it into something you would have written. This is particularly difficult if the topic is very close to your own research, but just bear in mind that it's not your paper – it's theirs!

Being kind and constructive will not only ensure a better quality review, but will also reduce your stress in the knowledge of a challenging) job well done.

Time for a change?

If, however, you're feeling the strain, you could consider "changing your working practices; taking a break or a holiday; improving skills [including stress management]; taking more exercise; and seeking counselling" (Kara, 2018, p.165). All these strategies are explored in more detail in the next section.

Crisis management

Research, and especially independent research, can be a lonely road, and (especially if working on sensitive topics) we need to know when to ask for help and support. Cluver et al. (2014, pp.49-50) report that some researchers have been so affected by their research that they have developed post-traumatic stress. While we hope that the strategies discussed in this chapter will be instrumental in avoiding a crisis situation, if you (or an acquaintance) find themselves in a dark place, seek help and support sooner rather than later. Boynton (2021, pp.25-7) provides a questionnaire to help you construct a safety plan; it's based on a Papyrus resource which can be downloaded or printed (Papyrus, n.d.).

SELF-CARE IN DAILY LIFE

For this section, rather than draw only from the literature and our own experiences, we canvassed members of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, and our Facebook followers, to find out how they practised self-care within their own lives. As these examples show, the results were illuminating.

> *How do I practise SELF-CARE as an independent scholar? By walking 10 laps (1.25 miles) in the local hockey arena, writing papers and blogs for various publications including Psychology today and the Globe and Mail (Canada) and playing chess with friends and on the internet.* [Thomas R. Verney]
>
> *Along with things like lunch with girlfriends or reading a non-work related book or family time, I do Rope Flow. It is exercise, meditation, and just plain fun. It can be done practically anywhere and the ropes are very portable. Here is an example – not me obviously.* *https://youtu.be/dL1jvQpKKK0?si=3brplYMeQrSUPCYH* [Freda Bradley]
>
> *1. God-Husband-Friends-Research/Writing are my priorities, in this order.*
> *2. As a Master's Track & Field athlete (although a very slow one), I work out on the track or run on the roads for 40 minutes early each morning, except for Sundays.*
> *3. I sleep eight hours a night.*
> *4. [Our] retirement income doesn't depend on my research, writing, and presenting. I remind myself that research, writing, and presenting are enjoyable professional pursuits.*
> [Mary Ellen Nourse]

Clearly, making time for yourself away from your desk is a constant theme, as is physical exercise, and nurturing our relationships with others. However, this is easier said than done, so we will now consider the particular challenges of independent scholarship that can impact on our wellbeing, and present ways in which independent scholars meet and overcome these challenges.

Spiritual wellbeing

A Euro-Western perspective often emphasizes that "individual, spiritual wellbeing depends on each person's beliefs" and "most Euro-Western researchers are used to [...] keeping their spiritual life private [...] and generally separate from their research work" (Kara, 2018, p.166) although for some it is their personal beliefs that have inspired their research interests. For Indigenous researchers, on the other hand, research itself may be described "as a ceremony or ritual" (Wilson, 2008; Meyer, 2013, p.252, cited in Kara, 2018, p.166).

Spirituality is a deeply personal issue which may be expressed for some through a strong religious faith and participating in ritual events, while for others spirituality may be expressed through other means such as practising yoga or getting in touch with nature.

> *Try to spend a few minutes every day meditating and/or reading inspiring works that bring you to a spiritual place (however you define that) and spend time in nature, preferably every day if possible.* [Anon]
>
> *Connect with animals if possible (e.g., pets, bird-watching, observing antics of animals in your yard).* [Anon.]
>
> *You don't have to be a Hindu or buy into a bunch of hippy-dippy stuff or caress crystals; [practising yoga] does just about every aspect of your being so much good. I feel better doing it every day, whether for fifteen minutes, thirty, or an hour. Doesn't matter. What we do is sedentary and cerebral; we need to balance it with activity and hands-on stuff.* [Phillip Reid]

Relational wellbeing

> Relational wellbeing implies harmonious interpersonal relationships; not necessarily conflict free (that would be unrealistic), but where conflict is managed constructively (Kara, 2018, p.167).

Both Kara and Boynton discuss relational wellbeing mostly in terms of negotiating the bullying and harassment that is unfortunately all too common in academia and is considered to affect up to 25% of university staff (Lipsett, 2005). Happily for independent scholars, we are mostly free of such workplace conflicts, so in this chapter we focus on the health of interpersonal rather than interprofessional relationships.

When we're digging deep into our own research it's very easy to develop tunnel vision and forget to nurture the aspects of life that 'normal' people do. As Phillip Reid says, we need proactive human contact:

> *we need to make more effort than most to connect, however we can, to people whose company we find rewarding. People who seem to actually care about us, and people we find worth investing in. What we do is all up in our heads; we need to get out of our heads, and pay substantive attention to the lives of other humans we care about. There is no substitute for that.*

Validation of your work

Not everyone understands that one can spend so many years researching (often niche) areas and put so much effort into publishing when it brings us little to no income. We may therefore have to educate our friends and family about what it means to be an independent scholar (IS). All of us who work from home in any capacity will no doubt have encountered the challenge of explaining that we can't just drop everything to come out to play, and we need to validate our role. As Kathryn Burrows says,

> *This has been a challenge for me, but try to find a way to educate your friends and family about what being an IS is all about. It's NOT a hobby. It's not some sort of lazy pastime. Being a scholar is a calling, a vocation, and just because I have chosen to pursue that vocation as an IS, doesn't make my work any less legitimate or any less "scientific".*

Dealing with academic isolation

Isolation is a prevailing theme for many of us. Those who achieved our PhDs later in life, sometimes at a distance from our university (and sometimes family too), learned to organise their time accordingly, but still missed out on close interactions with their fellow doctoral students. As Amanda says,

> *I was a single parent in my 30s when I did my first two degrees in music at a UK university, so had to rush home to look after my children when my fellow students went to the student bar. I missed out on a lot of useful discussions, such as joining tutors and students from my composition course who met up in the pub for lively discussions about composition. Later, in my 40s, I did a PhD at a distant university. This entailed a 6-hour round trip to meet with my supervisor and get to the university library, and I needed to get back for work and to conduct my ethnographic research which involved a lot of field trips. If I'd stayed to socialize/network I don't think I'd ever have completed my PhD.*

Collegiality

Amanda's experience is echoed by many ISs, who are very aware of this absence of an academic community. Our need to belong to a tribe is very strong, and whether during or after doctoral research, growing your own academic support network is very important. Fortunately, the growth and accessibility of social media and videoconferencing means it is now much easier to engage with other researchers, whether generally or within our specialist fields. Indeed, it's essential that we do so.

> *[We need to] improvise collegiality as best as we can; any chance to collaborate on work with someone worth collaborating with is a good thing. Makes me feel plugged into the field in a way that working alone does not, even when I get published for it.* [Phillip Reid]

> *Surrounding yourself with a supportive community like NCIS is critical. The FB group has been great for me – I've found mentorship via that group, mentorship that if I were faculty, I would have built-in. We need to find a way to re-create the supportive (or, in some cases, not so much!) environment of a university department. In a university setting, more experienced faculty naturally mentor more junior faculty, and as an IS, it's crucial that you try to recreate that environment as much as possible. Academic work is not created in a vacuum, but it is a dialogue among fellow academicians, and just because you are an IS, doesn't mean you have to be excluded from that dialogue.* [Kathryn Burrows]

Finding your tribe

To find your tribe(s), it's a simple matter to google "Facebook" and your specialism(s) to plug into these communities: examples of such specialist Facebook (Meta) pages include the Ethnomusicology Writing Group and Historical Linguistics and Etymology. This may well lead to creative partnerships when you encounter someone else whose research connects or resonates with your own, and we can attest to having struck up partnerships and friendships through these groups. Although getting together in-person with fellow researchers at events and conferences can be very beneficial, some researchers found that the move to meeting and connecting online, hastened by the official measures associated with COVID-19,had and continues to have advantages, in terms of accessibility, and saving time and costs spent travelling.

Organizing your time (and space)

It's not easy to balance the considerable time needed for research with other commitments such as family and paid work. However, sorting out your priorities and organizing your life so that you can achieve everything without running round in circles is crucial.

> *Prioritize your scholarly work. Don't put it off to the side to do "when you have time." You have to make time for your scholarly work. It's just as important as your paid work. Don't let your paid work dominate your scholarly work.* [Kathryn Burrows]

However, prioritising your research may impact on the other aspects necessary for your wellbeing, so you might find the need to establish a balance that works for you. Do you work better early in the morning while the house is quiet? Or late at night when the children are in bed? Can you carve out blocks of time or even whole days for research, and ensure everyone respects your "office hours"?

Establishing a dedicated workspace

We all know that research is not a tidy activity. We all need books and papers to hand, not to mention innumerable photocopies, printouts, and the essential hardware (computer, printer etc.). Working on the family dining table, and needing to clear everything away so people can eat is not conducive to researcher wellbeing, so a dedicated work area is pretty well essential. Even a cupboard under the stairs, if it affords good light and privacy from household goings-on is better than that. So do try and establish "your" workspace. It will also make it easier to disappear into there as family and friends are far more likely to respect it if you're in your "office."

Getting to your desk

As independent scholars we generally conduct our research (and certainly do the writing up) from home, meaning that there are many distractions to keep us from knuckling down. A "study buddy" system can be extremely useful in this respect as it makes you accountable. You can join online writing groups (often free) or sign up to a platform such as Focusmate through which you're paired up with one other person. You have to sign in on time, which gets you to your desk; you exchange greetings with your partner and tell each other what you're going to be working on, then report back on your progress at the end. Again, these partnerships feed into the collegiality we all need, as virtual friendships and research collaborations can be made through such platforms.

Getting away from your desk

Just as getting to your desk may be a challenge, recognizing when you need a break might also be important in order to achieve a good work-life balance.

> [Balancing work-life] is the same for anyone who works alone on their own time, but it is perhaps especially important for those who have a passion for what they're doing, because that easily becomes obsessive. Work has to have its allotted time in a week and it cannot be allowed to take over everything. The mind will stop working when it does not rest. Conversely, when the motivation or inspiration is not there, it cannot be forced. What we

do is, to some extent, creative; we have to learn all the "tricks" we need to do in order to put ourselves in a situation conducive to getting inspired or motivated. What helps us think, unboundedly and without pressure? Sometimes, we have to just take time away. Especially if we're coming off a long-term, intensive project. As Jimmy Buffett put it, "Sail away – for a month at a time/Sail away – I've got to recharge my mind/And you'll find me back at it again." [Phillip Reid]

CONCLUSION

Self-care for independent scholars means taking steps to look after our mental and physical health and doing activities to restore, refresh and nourish our sense of self that sustain our relationship with ourselves so that we can be the best version of ourselves for our own sake and for others (Mallon, 2024).

It's clear that there are many aspects to ensuring our wellbeing as independent researchers, not least achieving a balance between dedication to our work, attention to our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, and nurturing our relationships with others. Only you can work out how to achieve this in your own life, but we would like to finish by presenting the following suggestions from our contributors.

- Be part of a nurturing community (perhaps beyond your immediate family).
- Cultivate healthy friendships (not just intimate relationships).
- Eat healthy food (e.g., Mediterranean diet).
- Get physical – take regular exercise, preferably outdoors.
- Take time away from your desk.
- Volunteer with a nonprofit or charity. Use your skills and talents for something larger than yourself, as long as it remains rewarding as opposed to draining.
- Sing or do something else musically. Singing is a full-body experience and can be very healing.
- Seek out your research 'tribe(s)' and contribute to them.
- Cultivate an accepting relationship with patience – research is a long-term process.

In short, look after yourself!

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PART 6

RESOURCES FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

6.1. INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS’ BOOKSHELF (a selection)

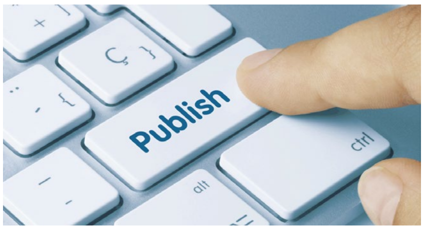
PHYSICAL BOOKSHELF

Caccipuoti, C., and Keohane-Burbridge, E. (eds.*)* (2020). *Independent Scholars Meet the World: Expanding Academia Beyond the Academy*. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas).

Gross, R.. (1994). *The Independent Scholar's Handbook: The Indispensable Guide for the Stubborn Intelligence* (Ten Speed Press).

Orlans, H. (2002), “Independent scholars: A neglected breed.” *Society* **40,** pp. 12–22. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02802965

Sheldon, K, with Dawson, S. T. (2016). “Independent Scholars, Feminist Research, and Diminishing Support,” CCWH (Coordinating Council for Women in History) Newsletter, 46, 4 (December), pp. 7-8.



VIRTUAL BOOKSHELF

Haste, A. . "Affiliation? Who Needs It?" *The Independent Scholar Quarterly* (May 2014), 5-7.

Kara, H.. "What I have learned from 20 years as an Independent Researcher." Social Research Association. Blog. n.d.

Mahlberg, G. Blog. https://thehistorywoman.com/2015/09/19/redefining-the-independent-scholar/. n.d.

Nelson, M. K. . "Hey Academics, Please Stop Calling Me an 'Independent Scholar'” Blog post (September 2017).

Nicolaides, B.. "My Journey through the Research Access Crisis" (UCLA Center for the Study of Women, March 2019).

Nicolaides, B.. "Locked Out: Research Access as a Challenge for the Discipline.". Online. *Perspectives on History* (American Historical Association, August 2018).

Ross, H., with Haste, A. and Baines, L. (Eds.). (2022). *Global Cuisines by Independent Scholars A Learned Cookbook*. Battleboro VT: National Coalition of Independent Scholars.

6.2 ACADEMIC BLOGS (non-discipline-specific)

Helen Kara – blog on writing and research

https://helenkara.com/blog/

Pat Thompson - blog on academic writing

https://patthomson.net/author/patthomson/

Research Insiders – welcoming you into the secrets, techniques and taboos around succeeding in a Research Higher Degree

https://researchinsiders.blog/

The Research Whisperer – just like the Thesis Whisperer but with more money

https://researchwhisperer.org/

Tara Brabazon (Professor at Flinders University, Australia)

https://tarabrabazon.libsyn.com/

The Thesis Whisperer - written by Professor Inger Mewburn, director of researcher development at The Australian National University.

https://thesiswhisperer.com/

6.3. ACADEMIC FACEBOOK (META) GROUPS

GENERAL

Academic Writers Unblock!

Forum run by Sharon Shahaf.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/AcademicWritersUnblock/

Independent Scientists

A group for independent scientists, and for scientists and students interested in leaving academia to become independent scientists.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/134616607174585/

I Should Be Thriving: Advancing Gender/Ethnic/Class Minorities in Academia

Virtual retreats, social workspaces as well as support for minorities.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/IShouldBeThriving/

National Coalition of Independent Scholars

US-based non-profit organization with an international membership.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/NationalCoalitionofIndependentScholars

PhD OWLs – Older Wiser Learners

For people who start or re-enter studying in their 40s, 50s, 60s or older.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/708019069302386/

The Professor is In

Forum run by Karen L. Kelsky, Ph.D., previously a tenured professor, department head, and university advisor, and now an academic career advisor, advising especially on alt-ac transition.

https://www.facebook.com/TheProfessorIsIn/

Women in Academia Careers Support Network (WIASN)

For female, trans, non-binary, queer academics (including unaffiliated researchers). Also very supportive of neurodivergent women.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/905644729576673/

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC

The Archaeologist

https://www.facebook.com/TheArchaeologistOfficial/

Critical Ethnography

https://www.facebook.com/groups/708668335919178/

Entomology

https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheEntomologyGroup

Ethnographers

https://www.facebook.com/groups/ethnographers/

Ethnomusicology Writing Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1206672636031905/,

Historical Linguistics and Etymology

https://www.facebook.com/groups/historicallinguisticsandetymology/.

Mechanical Engineering World

https://www.facebook.com/groups/Mech.Eng.World.Group

Psychology Today

https://www.facebook.com/psychologytoday/

Save Ancient Studies Alliance

https://www.facebook.com/SaveAncientStudies/

This is just a selection: to find your tribe, search Facebook/Meta on https://www.facebook.com/groups_browse/see_all/?category_id=1545015232276099

AND FOR LIGHT RELIEF….

Piled Higher and Deeper

"Piled Higher and Deeper" (PhD) is the comic strip about life (or the lack thereof) in academia.

https://www.facebook.com/phdcomics/

Shit Academics Say

https://www.facebook.com/academicssay/

Reviewer 2 Must Be Stopped

https://www.facebook.com/groups/reviewer2/

About NCIS

NCIS was formed in the USA in January 1989 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation to facilitate the work of Independent Scholars, and now serves scholars worldwide. Its overall mission is to serve the interests of Independent Scholars in relation to scholarly associations, funding agencies, publishers, editors, academic institutions and libraries.

NCIS seeks to:

• Improve access to research libraries and institutions for Independent Scholars.

• Offer Independent Scholars information and advice about grants, fellowships, and publishing.

• Promote conferences and workshops.

• Provide grant funding for NCIS members.

Hold regular free research and upskilling webinars for members

• Encourage information exchange through publications and electronic communication.

• Provide a sense of community in which Independent Scholars can exchange scholarly interests and expertise.

• Aid organizations of Independent Scholars by collecting and sharing organization experience and by publicizing their work.

• Provide information for the creation of local organizations of Independent Scholars.

For details of membership criteria, grants program, and resources for Independent Scholars, go to www.ncis.org.

You can also join us on Facebook, LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter).

www.ncis.org