

# Theological Research Methods II:

## *Efficient Literature Search*

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1

## Learning Outcomes

1. General overview of sources and resources for academic research
2. Strategies for achieving efficient and effective searches for literature
3. Evaluation of academic rigour of published literature
4. Collating and archiving resources

2

## Background & Review of Scholarship

- Every postgraduate research is aimed at making contribution to scholarship
- Every postgraduate research is focused on solving a problem which is of interest to scholars or shedding light on that problem
- Background & Review of scholarship section of the RP is devoted to demarcating the scholarly terrain of the problem and therefore how the research is related to that terrain
- If the problem has not been of interest to scholars, the researcher should use the section to demonstrate that based on other scholarly interests this problem must also be of interest to them.

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3

3

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4

4

**Ultimately, the success of any postgraduate research is determined by three factors:**

1. Accessibility to sufficiently reliable and robust primary and secondary scholarly resources,
2. The rigour with which the researcher engages with these resources, and
3. Their demonstration of the contribution of the research to this body of scholarship

## **Primary Source**

Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later.

## Some helpful Electronic Repositories for Primary Sources

- **Duke University:**  
<https://guides.library.duke.edu/c.php?g=289800&p=1931318>
- **Biblehub:** [https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2\\_kings/1-2.htm](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_kings/1-2.htm)
- **Logos Bible Software:** <https://www.logos.com/>

## Secondary Sources

Secondary sources for research are materials that interpret primary sources or evaluate or analyse about a topic using primary source data, but were not created or experienced firsthand by the original event, person, or phenomenon being studied. Secondary sources may or may not be from academic and are of different degrees of rigour which need to be evaluated and critically analyzed as part of the research process

Secondary sources are important for providing context, analysis, and interpretation of primary sources, but they do not represent the direct, original evidence or experiences being studied. Researchers often use a combination of primary and secondary sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.

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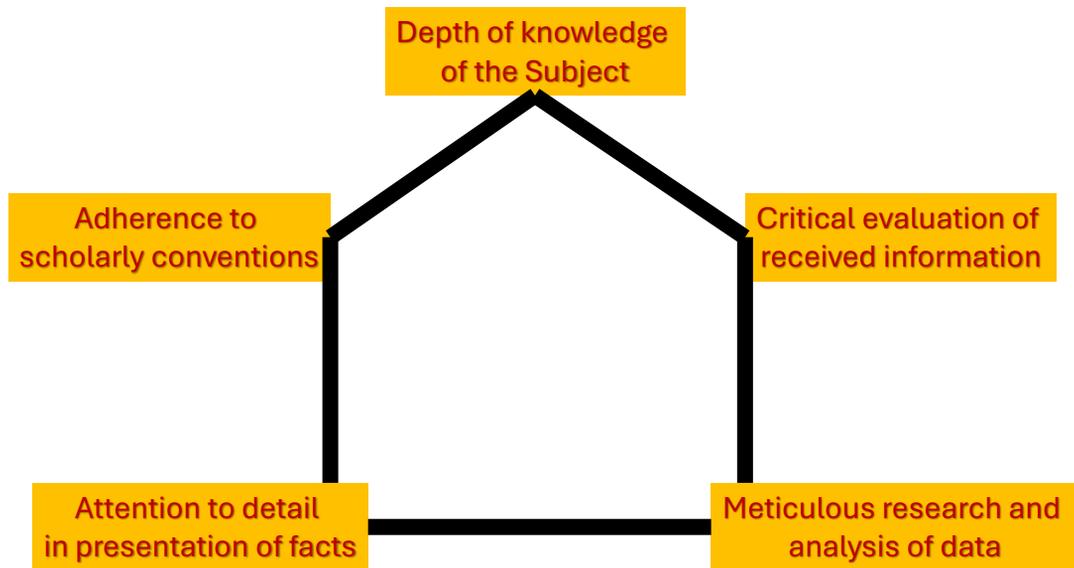
1. Accessibility to sufficiently reliable and robust primary and secondary scholarly resources,
2. The rigour with which the researcher engages with these resources, and
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## What is Academic Rigour in Theological Research?

Rigour in theological research is a combination of the depth and quality of analysis, coherence in reasoning, critical evaluation of data and their sources, and validity of evidence used in the study of a relevant theological problem.

11

## Five co-ordinates of Academic Rigour



12

## Criteria for assessing academic rigour of publication

1. **Peer Review Process:**
  - Was the publication subject to a thorough peer review process by experts in the field?
  - Does the journal or publisher have a reputation for rigorous peer review?
2. **Methodology:**
  - Is the research methodology clearly described and appropriate for the research question?
  - Are the data collection and analysis methods robust and well-documented?
  - Are the limitations of the study acknowledged?
3. **Theoretical Grounding:**
  - Is the study situated within the existing body of literature and theory?
  - Does the publication demonstrate a deep understanding of the theoretical frameworks relevant to the research topic?
4. **Objectivity and Neutrality:**
  - Does the publication present the findings in an objective and impartial manner?
  - Are the conclusions and interpretations supported by the evidence presented?
  - Is there a clear separation between the author's opinions and the research findings?
5. **Contribution to Knowledge:**
  - Does the publication offer new insights, findings, or perspectives that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field?
  - Does it address a significant gap or problem in the existing literature?
6. **Transparency and Reproducibility:**
  - Are the data, methods, and analyses sufficiently described to allow for replication and verification by other researchers?
  - Are the materials, procedures, and analyses made available (e.g., data repositories, code sharing)?
7. **Citation Impact:**
  - How often is the publication cited by other academic sources?
  - Is it published in a journal with a high impact factor or reputation in the field?
8. **Ethical Considerations:**
  - Does the publication adhere to ethical standards in research, such as informed consent, data protection, and research integrity?
  - Are any potential conflicts of interest disclosed?

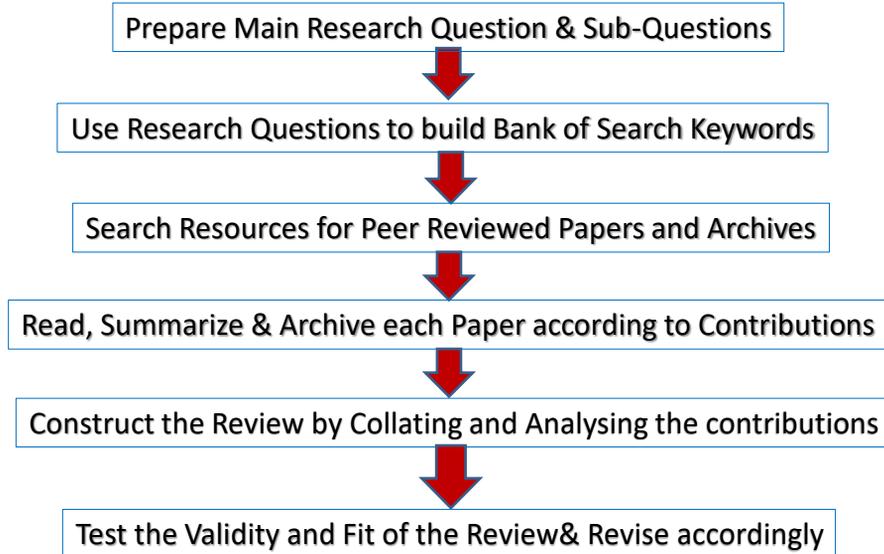
13

## Theological Research is Spiritual Warfare

- Not all academically rigorous publications are theologically sound. Indeed, many academically rigorous publications in Bible and theology lack sound commitment to conservative and evangelical commitment to sound biblical and theological foundations.
- Conversely, not every conservative or evangelical, and even biblically orthodox publications are academically rigorous enough for graduate theological research
- Students and researchers who are committed to sound biblical orthodoxy are therefore faced with the dual challenge of constantly employing rigorous academic criteria for evaluating publications on the one hand, while also depending constantly on the Spirit's guidance in discerning the level of commitment to orthodoxy.
- Conservative and evangelical researcher must always therefore understand research as part of the spiritual warfare to which they are called, sober in mind but with loins girded for the battle (1 Pet 1:13).

14

## Procedure for Preparing the Literature Review



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15

15

## Process of Collecting “Literature” for Review

1. Prepare Bank of Search terms
2. Identify all appropriate Search Engines
3. Perform Efficient search for literature
4. Organize and collate the Literature
5. Read, analyse and review Literature

16

## Search Engines & Websites

- Online Search Engines
  - ebooks, Google Scholar, Google Books, Amazon, scholars' blogs
- Online Databases:
  - ATLA Religion, JSTOR, Ethos, Web of Knowledge, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA), OCLC FirstSearch
- Universities Dissertations Repositories
- Bibliographies
- Abstracts
- Book Reviews
- Footnotes in articles and books
- Artificial Intelligence\*

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17

17

## Online Databases of Peer Reviewed Journals

- Ethos: <https://libguides.ials.sas.ac.uk/az/ethos-electronic-theses-online-system>
- Web of Knowledge: <https://access.clarivate.com/login?app=wos&alternative=true&shibShireURL=https:%2F%2Fwww.webofknowledge.com%2F%3Fauth%3DShibboleth&shibReturnURL=https:%2F%2Fwww.webofknowledge.com%2F&roaming=true>
- Theology Reading Room: <https://reading-rooms.tyndale.ca/>
- Religion and Philosophy Collection: <https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/religion-philosophy-collection>
- The Theological Journal Library: <https://www.acl.org/2022/11/06/theological-journal-library/>
- Directory of Open Access Journals ([www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org))
- Ingenta ([www.ingentaconnect.com](http://www.ingentaconnect.com))
- Practical Theology Hub: (<https://practicaltheologyhub.com/>)

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18

18

## Universities Dissertations for Research

- ProQuest Dissertations & Theses: <https://about.proquest.com/en/products-services/pqdtglobal/>
- Open Access Theses and Dissertations (OATD): <https://oatd.org/>
- Legon: <https://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/handle/123456789/22146>
- Cape Vars: <https://ir.ucc.edu.gh/xmlui/handle/123456789/23>
- KNUST: <https://roar.eprints.org/2319/>
- SATS: <https://sats.ac.za/theses/>
- UNISA: <https://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/506>
- British Library: <https://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do;jsessionid=1F254320E521C7343B1763A8B6D1630B>
- Edinburgh: <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/133>
- Duke University:  
<https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/410/browse?type=type&value=Dissertation>
- Southern Baptist: <https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/2643>
- Princeton: <https://ptsem.libguides.com/c.php?g=700451&p=4970216>
- St Andrews: <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

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19

19

## Using University Libraries for Research

- Identify your research question Key words, synonyms and subjects
- Use the library's online catalogue to search for books, journals, and other materials related to your topic.
- Narrow down your search results by using filters such as publication date, author, and subject.
- Read the abstracts or summaries of the materials to determine their relevance to your research question.
- Access the full text of the relevant materials either online or in print.
- Read and take notes on the materials that are most relevant to your research question.

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20

20

# Bank of Search Keywords

Index + Substitutes + Related + Referenced Words

21

## Building Bank of Search Keywords

1. **Index Words:**
  - Mark up the keywords in the Problem statement or Main Research Question
2. **Substitutes Words:**
  - For each key word identify their English synonyms, alternative technical words in the discipline and specific examples in discipline
3. **Related Words:**
  - Use these words to do a quick search for relevant papers
  - Skim through their Abstracts for recurring words related to the subject to add to bank of search keywords
4. **Referenced Words:**
  - Check the References in some articles and identify recurring words in titles of references
5. **Discarded Words:**
  - Eliminate words which do not seem to work

22

**How will you proceed Building a Bank of Keywords  
for the following Main Question:**

**How do the Discipleship Practices in Charismatic  
Churches in Adenta Impact on the local Culture?**

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23

23

**How will you organize the literature search for the  
following Title:**

**“A quest for an effective evangelism strategy for the  
youth: A case study in International Central Gospel  
Church Acts Temple Ghana”**

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24

24

## Another Example Bank of Search Keywords

### 1. Index Words:

1. The intersection of the Christian faith and mental health in the contemporary Ghanaian society: Strategies for pastoral care and support

### 2. Substitute Words:

- The Christian Faith: **Christianity, Church, Bible, spirituality**
- Mental Health: **psychological, emotional, depression, psychiatry**
- Pastoral Care: **counselling, ministry, care**
- Ghanaian society: **Ghana**

### 3. Related Words:

### 4. Reference Words:

### 5. Eliminate keywords which do not work:

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25

25

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- Mental Health: **psychological, emotional, depression, psychiatry**
- Pastoral Care: **counselling, ministry, care**
- Ghanaian society: **Ghana**

### 3. Related Words: **Spirituality, Religion**

### 4. Reference Words:

### 5. Eliminate keywords which do not work:

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26

26

Questions?