

PRACTICAL ISSUES IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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Introduction

This article is written from the perspective of academic research administration. It covers a constellation of research issues common to Christian universities and seminaries that seek to develop the research skills of their faculty members to benefit churches and the broader community. Through research, these faculty members can strengthen those who are seeking to actively live their beliefs in contemporary life. Viewing the details of everyday living through divine direction and faith insights, they also can offer godly wisdom, fresh understandings, and innovative applications that will benefit the entire community.

This article is a distillation of experience representing a Christian university and an evangelical seminary in research leadership. It is a result of representing a Christian university in the broader Canadian research culture, interacting with agencies and government offices, and fulfilling their expectations. In addition, it is the result of experience following through with the development of a research office that supports academic researchers who are toiling faithfully to find funds for their research, implement their research, and disseminate their research findings.

Is a Seminary a Research Institution?

The level of preparation of teaching personnel of most seminaries is comparable to that of university personnel. Most seminaries hire PhDs to do their teaching.⁵ The PhD is a research degree – it mainly exists to inculcate the skills students with intelligence and drive need to create new knowledge and communicate it to various publics. Because the normal requirement for professors is one degree level over the one being taught, seminary professors need a PhD or equivalent doctoral degree. But the program itself is focused on research.

⁵ The author conducted a website survey of Canadian Christian universities and seminaries in July 2023 to determine the degree levels of the full- and part-time faculty who are involved in preparing students for ministry. Of 240 Christian university faculty members, 92% hold earned doctorates and 3% are doctoral candidates. Of 329 Christian seminary faculty members, 55% hold earned doctorates and 1% are doctoral candidates. The institutions that offer both college and seminary education are included because their websites may not distinguish between college and seminary faculty.

Many seminaries hire faculty for teaching and service only. They are seeking teachers who are experts in their subject and exemplary Christians who will mentor their students as they prepare for Christian leadership. Seminary teaching schedules tend to be demanding, with little time left for research. Some seminary faculty may publish and present, but their desire to use their research skills must be supported by their families if they are to do so successfully.

The PhDs seminaries hire are highly skilled. At the completion of their doctoral programs and before they settle into teaching, they arguably are at the height of their research powers. What are they to do with the research skills that they have learned? Before the new professor realizes it, enough years have passed that the thesis research is cold and research patterns have not been established. The tendency then would be to settle into teaching and never share their hard-earned expertise with the larger field. A seminary that lets its research expertise go to waste will not contribute to the larger fields that they teach.

A seminary's attitude toward research is important. Universities may give new hires a year at the beginning of their employment to work on publications. The university benefits because their faculty are seen as productive and may attract students to their research specializations. At the very least, seminary professors should be encouraged to turn their thesis into a book or articles as soon as possible. There are many resources to teach the new professor how to do this.⁶ If a seminary is attached to a university, it may have a research office to help professors establish research patterns and provide funding. If the seminary is not part of a university system, support for research is likely to be limited.⁷

The conundrum for seminaries is that they hire PhDs and then, through lack of resources and a perception that faculty will mainly teach, let their research skills languish and never reap the benefits that academic and applied research can provide to the institution and its students. Will a portion of the talents that God has entrusted to them be wasted, or will they develop strategies to support research as part of the primary business of the institution?

⁶ A thesis is not what publishers are looking for in a book. Helpful resources for getting theses published are Eleanor Harman and Ian Montagnes, eds., *The Thesis and the Book*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) and Beth Luey, *Revising Your Dissertation: Advice from Leading Editors*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

⁷ Most Christian universities have a Research Office. Many seminary professors write articles and attend conferences where they present papers but are not supported in these endeavours by their institutions. Five of 19 Canadian evangelical seminaries employ a research officer.

Everyone Can Do Research

Ernest Boyer's model of research⁸ supports the contention that seminary professors can find an avenue of research to keep themselves current for their students. Boyer proposed that research falls into four types: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. In doing so, he opened research to all faculty members, regardless of discipline, and made it possible for them to build a research record on a small or large scale.⁹

Discovery is using the traditional methods of disciplines to create new knowledge or to create original works, including compositions, film, and video games. Creation may include applications and curricula. Research methodology varies widely between disciplines. Historians learn to let primary documents speak, sociologists learn to conduct and evaluate empirical surveys, and biblical scholars must demonstrate knowledge of numerous ancient languages. In addition, most areas of research contain many specializations, with their own conversations and their own preferred research methodologies.¹⁰

Integration is making a broad study across the discipline or across disciplines to offer new insights concerning possible connections and their implications. The need for integration is obvious when a student can raise their hand in a history course and admit to confusion because their sociology professor presents an entirely different picture of the subject than their history professor. If the connections within the discipline or across disciplines are not apparent, researchers who have been trained in interdisciplinary methods can add to new knowledge by bringing them forward for consideration.

Application is using research methodology to address problems of contemporary life. For example, North American culture is preoccupied with social issues – matters of equality, wellness, and successful living. How do church people understand these issues? What practical interventions might pastors employ? Professors can cooperate with denominational offices as they build a research base to serve as consultants to churches and add to it over time as they create reports on issues like leadership, church growth, and discipleship. Studies like the Evangelical

⁸ Boyer, Ernest L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Second Edition, 1996.

⁹ A helpful summary discussion of Boyer's model and its impact is : Marta Nielbert, "Boyer's Model of Scholarship," accessed July 28, 2023, https://www.facultyguidebook.com/test/2_5_1.htm.

¹⁰ For example, among the many specializations in the history of Christianity are the world of the ancient church, the early church fathers, the Reformation, revivals, and evangelicalism as a movement in the 20th century. Each of these specializations contain many sub-specializations, such as attitudes to women, the environment, worship, and so on.

Fellowship of Canada research report on small churches are beneficial across denominations.¹¹

Boyer includes a fourth area of research that is fundamental to his support of changing paradigms of postsecondary instruction from the elitist “sink or swim” model to the democratic student success model.⁸ Boyer sees research on teaching as one of the primary functions of research. In the early twentieth century, university professors were not expected to inspire their students to learn. The entrenched attitude was that students who didn’t respond to dry lecturing probably did not belong in postsecondary education. In the twenty-first century, professors take more responsibility for their students’ learning, not least because of student expectations. Thus, research on all aspects of teaching has become a recognized field of publishing and consulting and many Christian universities employ specialists who assist not only students, but also faculty in their student success proficiency.

The Goal of Research

The goal of research is to create new knowledge, to probe a question that has not been asked before, or to offer new solutions to problems.⁹ The researcher is expected to contribute to a conversation that is underway in their specialization.¹⁰ It may be that the subject has not yet been studied with professional skills, in which case the researcher has the opportunity to create seminal works and perhaps shape the research in the field. Alternatively, the subject may have been studied exhaustively and the researcher must have the originality to ask a new question or suggest an new angle that refreshes the conversation.

Every aspect of Boyer’s research model has the potential to create new knowledge. This potential can be seen in the following examples. Some professors are specialists in the history of Christianity. They may conduct discovery research, collecting collections of letters of children separated from their missionary parents in

¹¹ “Significant Church: Understanding the Value of the Small Church in Canada,” Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, accessed July 28, 2023, <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Communications/Research/Significant-Church-Small-Church-Research-Study>.

⁸ “Holistic Approach Makes ‘Sink or Swim’ and Outdated Concept,” U of T News, accessed July 28, 2023, <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/holistic-approach-makes-%E2%80%98sink-or-swim%E2%80%99-outdated-concept>.

⁹ A standard work on the research process is Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹⁰ “...[R]esearch” is defined as an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation. The term ‘disciplined inquiry’ refers to an inquiry that is conducted with the expectation that the method, results and conclusions will be able to withstand the scrutiny of the relevant research community.” “Scope,” Panel on Research Ethics, Government of Canada, accessed August 8, 2023, https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_interpretations_scope-portee.html.

the first half of the twentieth century, to learn about their experiences and needs. Their integration research may be writing literature reviews as they prepare for their courses or combining interests in history and business by exploring how churches have utilized business methods in evangelism. They could pursue application research by accumulating consulting reports assessing past and present church practices and using them as the foundation for publications. Finally, they may explore how culture has affected teaching of the history of Christianity. Using Boyer's model, there are numerous possibilities in every discipline and across disciplines to provide knowledge that church leaders need for effective ministries.

Christians possess an enormous potential to expand knowledge and not only in relation to church matters. Marxist scholarship in the twentieth century fostered a lingering critique by the economic questions it asked. What is sufficient remuneration to be able to maintain a healthy standard of living? Should children work? Should education and health care be free? What is the point at which pursuit of wealth becomes unbridled accumulation? What are the systemic effects of poverty? These are spiritual questions. Christians have biblical perspectives that allow them to foster conversations about these and other foundational issues of life, such as care of the world and respect for the "other." Are Christians researching life questions like these and publishing the results both inside and outside the outlets of the Christian world?

Don't Expect Administrators to Do Research

Administrators, research or otherwise, have time consuming jobs. They know that their responsibilities often require extra hours and sometimes coming into the office during holidays. Most likely, they are faculty used to doing research – the normal practice is to seek faculty members for deanships and chairs of departments. They can serve their colleagues well because they understand the requirements of academic life. While they serve, the professional development they seek most likely will be honing of leadership skills related to their positions. The reality of the demands of administrative responsibilities is recognized by universities by giving faculty members at the end of their administrative terms a year to refresh their specialized expertise before returning to the classroom.¹¹

¹¹ A search of university policies revealed that most policies concern appointment but not procedures for return to teaching. After a five-year term, a dean at a prominent Ontario university received a year to re-acquaint himself with his specialization before returning to teaching.

The character of an administrative position makes its own demands. Administrators make the detailed arrangements that keep the institution and the department functioning. On behalf of their institution, they seek innovation. They attend conferences and meetings. They provide leadership for faculty, maintain the regular cycle of necessary meetings, promote positive interrelations, facilitate goal setting, and watch articulation standards. The public character of administrative positions includes representing the institution before its supporters and potential and current students and representing the institution among institutions. Many of the speaking engagements on the administrator's calendar may not be academic in nature.

The nature of administrative positions raises an important caution. Sometimes departments are tempted to hire new PhDs and as soon as they have taught their course cycle a few times, hand them department headships. The new faculty member may be forgiven for not realizing that this is not the career advancement it seems because research quickly will become only a nagging hope. The caution is to refrain from giving new professors an administrative position until they have articulated their research plans and begun to publish. New faculty members need to be given space to recover from the rigours of a PhD program, ascertain how to fulfil the demands of a faculty position, including research, and become comfortable in their faculty roles. Then administration can become a reward for a satisfying faculty career and administrators will have the benefit of the leadership authority that accrues because of this career.

Research Context

Research context involves considerations like research support, teaching expectations, funding, travel requirements, and research methodology. Institutions provide varying research support. Because universities are, by definition, research institutions, compete for research funds from national agencies and private foundations, and are rated by the quality of their research, they facilitate research by providing research offices to advise faculty on applications and limiting their teaching hours. Christian universities in Canada have built up an impressive record of national funding and research. The funding their faculty members obtain may provide course buy-outs for research. Seminaries provide professional development funds that can be used for research and may budget for internal grant competitions but require the faculty member to teach a set number of courses and may offer

overload teaching. Seminary researchers are likely to depend on institutional funds because funding for Christian research is scarce in Canada.

If faculty members cannot engage in extended travel for any reason, they must choose research interests that can be explored from a local area. In this case, the research topic decision begins with graduate studies and carries on during the research career. For example, if a faculty member's spouse has an established career in the area and they have children in school, extended travel may not be the choice of the family. In addition, language fluency may be a consideration. Also, the faculty member may not have access to the funding required. The institution may fund at least part of travel to conferences, but conferences only qualify as research rather than as professional development if a presentation is made. Faculty members can enjoy productive research careers asking questions that do not require extended travel or funding.

Another consideration regarding context is the requirements of the research methodology of the faculty member's discipline. For example, if the research mainly involves documents, it may be carried out by one researcher or a small research team with a minimum of funding. Research requiring surveys may need personnel time and funds for developing a credible instrument, packaging it in an appropriate form for easy and sizable response, partnering with target organizations, processing the results, and preparing them for dissemination.

Research Ethics

Not only must researchers be aware of the research methods of their field but also of the general ethics of research. The researcher's institution must follow the ethics of Canadian research and the ethics of other countries as applicable.¹² Usually, institutions have research ethics committees made up of faculty who follow the Canadian guidelines and approve research projects that are submitted to them. All research projects that involve data collection from living subjects and that involve media of living subjects must be approved by this faculty committee. This is a field of expertise because questions may be inadvertently asked or photos included that may embarrass or threaten the research participant. The research ethics committee is trained to identify possible points of tension in a research project.

¹² For Canadian guidelines, see <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/science-research/science-advice-decision-making/research-ethics-board/policy-guidelines-resources.html>. For international research ethics guidelines, see <https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/policies-procedures/canada-usa-international>.

The purpose of research ethics is to ensure that all living subjects are respected.¹³ Institutions that have research ethics committees protect research participants and the institution from legal difficulties. Canadian and other agencies, such as SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR, may bar faculty members from applying to them for research funding if they have been found to breach ethical guidelines. An institution that has lax research ethics may be placed under supervision by the national Research Ethics Board until the necessary vigilance has been restored.

Some vigilance is common sense. Anonymity is important; research should never identify participants by name. Doing so does not contribute to the value of the research and may cause problems for the participant. Research ethics requires that permission to publish photos must be obtained.¹⁴ Research subjects may have valid reasons for keeping their photos off the internet.

Have a Research Plan

One of the most practical forms of advice this article can give to new professors is to develop a research plan. New professors should choose a research theme. It may be the theme of their doctoral research, or they may, with the research skills that they have acquired and the questions they encountered along the way, decide on a new overall question.¹⁵ The elements of a research plan are the overall question they desire to explore and the secondary questions that will bring them closer to understanding the main question. A research plan can lead to a satisfying research career and may be modified as the research leads to new paths of exploration.

¹³ If research projects involve human subjects, they must protect and respect these subjects. Consent to be a participant in a research study must be voluntary, informed, and an ongoing process. Faculty are encouraged to learn to conduct research ethically to produce substantial and defensible results.

In Canada, the research ethics movement started after federal government funding scandals made the development of guidelines imperative. Because the Canadian federal guidelines were developed after 2000, some faculty members may not have received research ethics training.

¹⁴ For Canadian guidelines concerning privacy and confidentiality, see https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-epc2_2018_chapter5-chapitre5.html. The Canadian Supreme Court decision concerning the general right to photo privacy can be found at <https://corporate.findlaw.com/litigation-disputes/the-use-of-a-person-s-photograph-without-their-consent.html>.

¹⁵ Christopher Watkin, in his blog, *Research Hacks*, suggests three questions to ask in deciding a research topic. “1. What research do you enjoy? 2. What research do you think is important? 3. What research conversation do you want to join?” Watkin, Christopher. “Research Hacks #2: Three important questions to ask before you choose a new research topic.” *Research Hacks*, Monash University, Australia, February 5, 2017, <https://christopherwatkin.com/2017/02/15/research-hacks-2-three-important-questions-ask-choose-new-research-project/>.

The value of the research plan is that it disciplines the faculty members' research, enables them to explore secondary questions on the way to becoming expert in a specific area, and guarantees a steady stream of presentations and publishing. The research plan drives interest. With a specific focus, researchers can choose associations, journals and networks that contribute to their research. They should attend association meetings and solicit feedback on their current work, read articles relevant to their interests, and develop working friendships with other researchers. These interactions will deepen their understanding of the subject, generate fresh thinking, and lead to enhanced productivity. If they maintain a research plan, after they have turned their doctoral thesis into a book or articles, it is likely that they will keep writing articles and book chapters and, eventually, more books.

Research Rhythms

Teaching is not conducive to research. Research requires concentration. Teaching requires much interaction. After a day of teaching when professors have exhausted themselves by giving themselves away, settling down to research seems remote. How can professors be productive researchers and disseminate their research when they have heavy teaching loads?

The notion of research rhythms is one possible solution. Some faculty members get up early and write for a few hours before others in the household arise. Some can write for four hours a day and publish books.¹⁶ However, this facile concentration is not a possibility for most faculty members. Many have family responsibilities and the image of the long-suffering spouse who raises the children as the spouse works long hours is not a value biblically or in contemporary culture.

One solution is to decide the next step in the research plan over the faculty member's break period (which may not be the same for every professor), develop a written outline, and set up folders, computer or otherwise, according to the outline. The topic may be divided into subtopics and assigned to other researchers. Then, over the teaching semesters, research ideas and sources can be added to the outline folders. If the researcher has been reading, networking, and adding to the files over the teaching period, relevant material will accumulate. If more research is needed, there will be time to do it. The professor may be able to hire and train student

¹⁶ Hollis Phelps, "Doing Research at a Teaching-Focused College," Inside Higher Education, accessed August 9, 2023, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/09/13/how-do-good-research-teaching-intensive-institution-essay>.

assistants to assist with the research. At the appropriate time, the article or presentation may almost write itself.

For those who do applied research along with a heavy teaching load, the process may be slightly different. The next step in the applied research process can be carefully planned and arranged (along with the research ethics application) during the professor's break period and other researchers brought in as desired. Again, research assistants trained by the professor could assist with the data collection during the teaching period. The research can be processed for dissemination during the researcher's next break period.

It might be appropriate to offer a comment concerning the difference between break periods and vacation time. Many people believe that faculty members are on break from May to August. This is not the case. Contractually, faculty members receive a certain number of vacation days each year. The remainder of the break period is work time, writing courses, supervising theses, setting up research, etc. While faculty members manage their schedules themselves during break time and therefore can be more relaxed, the responsibilities of the professorial role mean they work long hours probably eleven months of the year. With online teaching, they often work extended hours. As a result, vacation time should be strictly observed with a return email that reminds students and other inquirers not to expect a quick reply to their communications.

Research Balance: How Often to Publish?

Researchers should consider all their responsibilities to achieve a research balance. Faculty in research universities are subject to heavy publication pressures. High achieving researchers may believe that they are expected to generate ten articles a year and a book every two years.¹⁷ Indeed, some research universities have these expectations. But attention must be paid to family responsibilities and to ensuring that the faculty member contributes to the well-being of each member of the family. Male or female, single or married, family and friendships are the context within which work life opportunities must be managed. When professors are too busy to stop for a question or an opportunity to invest in the life of a student or colleague, they are too busy.

¹⁷ While researching my doctoral thesis, the author interviewed a professor who believed that his research university expected him to write 10 articles a year and a book every two years.

Some faculty members manage research balance by publishing extensively until they have established themselves as contributors to an academic conversation, then publish and present less or move into administration. Other faculty members intentionally publish a set number of pieces a year, for example, an article and a book review. As they become known as contributors to their academic conversation, they may be invited to submit articles and book chapters. Book opportunities may present themselves. Over time, their curriculum vitae builds, and they achieve a balanced and satisfying research life.¹⁸

Working in Research Teams

Faculty members need to be aware that the research model of working alone is no longer current. Collaborative research is the norm in contemporary research. If faculty members are applying for a grant to support their research, they may find that if they are not part of a research group, they may not get the grant.

Often small seminars include only one or two specialists in one field, and they likely have different research interests. Researchers in small seminars and universities may have to develop research relationships across institutions. With digital technology, there is no limit to the breadth of these relationships – a specialist in Manitoba may collaborate with a specialist in Canada or any country.¹⁹

The focus provided by the research plan will assist the newly hired professor to find other researchers who are working on the same questions through relevant associations. Digital communication will facilitate the development of fruitful academic conversations. Once the academic network is established, researchers can encourage one another and share the tasks of research and writing, including applying for grants. Research, then, is no longer a solitary, “midnight oil” endeavour. It becomes shared goals and an invigorating mutual exploration of research questions.

¹⁸ A book which discusses barriers to research writing is Paul J. Silva, *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007). A book that advocates for a more relaxed pace of research dissemination is Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

¹⁹ A free PDF of Allison Williams, Derek Jones and Judy Roberston, *BITE: Recipes for Remarkable Research* (Rotterdam, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2014) is available at <https://brill.com/display/title/36704>. It discusses practical aspects of collaborative research.

Research Assistants

Researchers may view research assistants as a means to extend their ability to collect research information. That is not how granting agencies view research assistants. Usually, research assistants are students. Faculty members have a responsibility to train their students in research methods, particularly their graduate students. Students who catch a research passion may persist toward doctoral studies and become researchers themselves. Therefore, granting agencies want to see research assistants on their grant applications.²⁰

Research assistants who are well trained in the research methods and standards of the academic field by faculty members are more effective on behalf of the research project. As part of a research grant application budget, they also make faculty members more effective in obtaining research funding.

Interdisciplinary Research Groups

Many graduate students are interested in interdisciplinary research. They become specialists in a variety of chosen fields, for example, biblical studies, history, and communications. They seek graduate programs that are open to this new approach to research.²¹ As professors, competent to speak across perspectives, they are less likely to encounter students who raise their hand in a history course and point out that they are having trouble putting together what they are hearing with what their sociology professor is teaching about the same events.

Indeed, academic work may be changing – “the future academic is primarily an expert who is able to produce new knowledge across disciplinary boundaries and together with those who eventually use the knowledge.”²² A way for professors, especially in small institutions, to avoid this puzzling problem is to put together a research team that includes specialists from different fields, including non-

²⁰ For example, one of the objectives of Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Councils Insight Grants is to “provide a high-quality research training experience for students.” “Insight Research,” Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, accessed August 3, 2023, https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/insight-savoir-eng.aspx.

²¹ Most universities offer interdisciplinary programs to the doctoral level. Universities Canada, the primary Canadian association that counts as members both public and private universities published an Op-Ed stating that “given the complexity of social, political, environmental, economic and technological challenges facing the world, interdisciplinary research is very quickly becoming something no country can do without.” Daniel Woolf, “The Future is Interdisciplinary,” accessed August 3, 2023, <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/the-future-is-interdisciplinary/>.

²² Johanna Hakala, “The Future of the Academic Calling: Junior Researchers in the Entrepreneurial University,” Higher Education, May 13, 2008, accessed August 12, 2023, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-008-9140-6>.

academics. The resulting conversations will be robust and vitalizing and they will acquaint the researchers with different methods and questions. New perspectives will challenge, and the research results will be innovative. For example, a team of specialists might synthesize the most cited literature in a certain subject across disciplines to explore an agreed upon question.

Why would a student have trouble reconciling the perspectives of history and sociology on Canadian religious history? How might specializations in interdisciplinary studies affect teaching within the seminary or Christian university? While specialized knowledge may take a lifetime to acquire, many younger professors desire to break down barriers between disciplines to uncover new questions and fresh insights. This trend is recognized and encouraged in the larger research community.

Popular Dissemination of Research

Granting agencies now recognize that research dissemination applies to popular audiences. Therefore, the dissemination section of a grant application may include plans for communicating the research to audiences that are not specialists in the subject²³. As Christians value clear communication so that the Good News may reach all in understandable ways, there is a teaching mandate in this recognition that broadens the importance of research. Research on values, for example, is not only for other researchers; it is for the edification of the family of God.

Researchers have a reputation for incomprehensible language and writing for the three people in the world who might understand them. In contemporary research, the ivory tower and Victorian wordiness are passé. What is valued in academic writing is spare, elegant language with jargon explained. Researchers who started their academic careers in Christian institutions may remember that in preaching classes they were admonished to preach to an intelligent 12-year-old.²⁴ Certainly, this advice could apply to presentations. The age may be raised somewhat

²³ SSHRC had a specific funding program for popular dissemination, the Public Outreach Grants (https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/public_outreach-sensibilisation_public/dissemination-diffusion-eng.aspx). Currently, among the objectives of SSHRC grant programs is “mobilize research knowledge, to and from academic and non-academic audiences, with the potential to lead to intellectual, cultural, social and economic influence, benefit and impact. “Insight Research,” Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, accessed August 4, 2023, https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/insight-savoir-eng.aspx.

²⁴ The author remembers this admonition from her Homiletics class at Northwest Baptist College. It is indelibly reiterated by Willie E. Hucks II in his article, “A lesson in preaching from a 12-year old,” *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2014/07/a-lesson-in-preaching-from-a-12-year-old>.

for academic writing, but articles and books should at least be understandable to undergraduates.²⁵

Academic writing has a distinct character. It is information and evidence based, and uses more evidence than stories to illuminate its points. The goal being communication, academic writing must make its points clearly and concisely. If popular presentations are not suitable for popular audiences, the communication goal is not met.

Workshops and seminars are forms of popular communication of research that attract both specialized and popular audiences. Many professors film videos and maintain blogs that allow them to communicate their research more informally.²⁶ While publication is still the gold standard for academics, researchers should include popular presentations in their research plans.

Success Rate in Granting

Realistically, there is little funding available for seminary research. Canadian Christian foundations have not awakened to the prospect of supporting Canadian voices in seminary research. The Priscilla and Stanford Reid Trust is one of the few funding sources for this research in Canada. Understanding the profound importance of Christian research, Dr. W. Stanford Reid established the Trust to support the research activities of Canadian theological educators. The research funded by the Trust is relatively modest, but many Christian researchers have been able to pursue mid-range projects with Reid Trust grants.²⁷

There are a few large foundation competitions for Christian institutions in the United States. The Louisville Institute has four grant programs and three early career fellowships.²⁸ The Wabash Centre has a range of grants, including for small or large projects.²⁹ These competitions are very large and, because there are so few, they are highly competitive. They likely require an institutional US tax number,³⁰ and the

²⁵ A useful book is Ralph E. Matkin and T.F. Riggan, *Persist and Publish: Helpful Hints for Academic Writing and Publishing* (University Press of Colorado, 1991).

²⁶ Examples of Northwest Baptist Seminary blogs include “Cross-Cultural Impact for the 21st Century,” <http://impact.nbseminary.com/>, and “Internet Moments with God’s Word,” <http://moments.nbseminary.com/>.

²⁷ The Priscilla and Stanford Reid trust website is found at <http://reidtrust.com/>.

²⁸ The Louisville Institute grant information is found at <https://louisville-institute.org/programs-grants-and-fellowships/>.

²⁹ The Wabash Centre grant information is found at <https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/wabash-grants/>.

³⁰ All institution who receive funding from American sources need an Internal Revenue Service number. For more information, see <https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits>.

adjudicators may not understand non-American PhD programs.³¹ Therefore, Canadian applications must be of the highest quality – applications that meet every requirement fully and answer every application question with precise detail are the most likely to be successful. Applications generally take months to write and should be read by a Research Office or trusted academic colleagues before submission.

Christian and other foundations have money to give away and they could develop signature research grant programs. In both Canada and the United States, Christian institutions and researchers could acquaint foundations with their research needs. Action on this front is sorely needed.

Giving Thanks for Editors

Researchers generally accept the peer reviews of their academic colleagues. Sometimes, however, they resent editors because they may remove excess words, change numbers to headings, and correct style.

Researchers are not expected to possess a talent for spelling or even grammar. They are expected to be highly trained specialists who bring fresh insights into the subjects they are exploring. The editor has the task of ensuring readability and maintaining the academic reputation of the journal. If a submission contains errors, other academics will lack motivation to read it, regardless of the quality of the research. In this way, the editor also is guarding the reputation of the researcher. In the end, however, it will be the editor who is held accountable for the errors and the reputation of the journal.³²

Some authors resist editing because they expect to be confronted with editorial changes and then resubmit. Many articles are not resubmitted. For the editor, the problem partly concerns the timing of new issues. Some journals have enough submissions that they can function this way. Relying on resubmissions may leave newer journals without articles for upcoming issues. Understanding this, researchers may decide to support newer journals and accept some editing so the journals can meet their publication schedules. They should receive an edited copy before publication if the editing has been more extensive than correcting use of

³¹ The requirements and terminology are different. An American doctoral program requires a certain number of courses and a dissertation. British doctoral programs tend to be completely research-based, with supervisor meetings culminating in a thesis. Due to the proximity of the American use of the term “dissertation,” some Canadians would prefer to use that term, but the correct word in Canada is “thesis.”

³² The research should check to see if the publishing house or journal has a style guide. For example, NIMER has posted Author Guidelines (<https://nimer.ca/about/guidelines/author-guidelines/>) and Editorial Guidelines (<https://nimer.ca/about/guidelines/editorial-guidelines/>).

“Ibid.” and adding periods wherever they should appear, but the article should be submitted to the journal in time for this process to occur.

Rather than being possessive of their submissions, many authors welcome editing as a necessary process on the way to publication. They view editing as a cooperative arrangement, one from which both authors and editors can learn.³³

Publishing in Canada

Fifty years ago, ambitious academics believed they had to publish in the United States or Britain to be noticed as a serious researcher. As secular academics persevered with publishing Canadian journals such as *Studies in Religion Journal/Sciences Religieuses*³⁴ and *Historical Papers*, Canadian Society of Church History,³⁵ in some cases with federal government support, the reputation of Canadian academic publishing grew. Researchers now can gain an international research reputation by publishing in Canada.

Some academics throughout the period of the emergence of Canadian research continued to publish elsewhere. They can look back with some surprise and regret. Where one publishes is an important factor in the strength of Canadian research. Academic journals that originate in Canada demonstrate the quality of research in Canada. Canadian researchers are well-advised to include Canadian journals in the publishing targets they include in their research plans.

Institutional Recognition of Research

After three years, most new professors are comfortable with the courses they teach. For many, the first year is spent keeping one class ahead of the students. The second year is devoted to revision, knowing what made the students want to learn and what could be presented more effectively. By the third year, professors can be sure that their courses will prepare their students for their lives and careers. What then? Do they repeat their courses *ad infinitum*, content to let the years go by with students receiving adequate instruction but not up-to-date instruction?

³³ Ralph E. Matkin and T.F. Riggart, *Persist and Publish: Helpful Hints for Academic Writing and Publishing* (University Press of Colorado, 1991) also contains tips for working with editors.

³⁴ *Studies in Religion Journal/Sciences Religieuses* is a Sage journal. The issues may be found at <https://journals.sagepub.com/loi/SIR>.

³⁵ The issues of *Historical Papers*, Canadian Society of Church History are found at <https://historicalpapers.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/historicalpapers>.

Research may not be in the professor's position description. It may then fall to the institution's professors to maintain the research skills acquired in doctoral studies.³⁶ It is to be hoped that as they are doing the work of course preparation, they are keeping up with the conversations of their fields and at least writing literature reviews for their colleagues. Any effort on their part to present and publish benefits the institution and therefore should be rewarded. Their accomplishments should be included in institutional and donor news so churches may benefit from their research.

If new faculty members have been supported by their institutions to do research, they may already have a book or articles. These institutions likely foster a research environment and regularly announce research accomplishments. As institutional research funds may be limited, their deans may meet with the institutional fundraisers to get money for research on their agendas. The institution should have an articulated process for establishing chairs and research institutes.

Every Christian institution of postsecondary education should consider how to reward research, whether through research mentoring, access to advising by a research office, promotion of the researcher's publications in the Christian community, an annual research points system that can be traded for a pay bonus or research time, and consideration of faculty members' research record when they are applying for promotion to the next faculty rank.³⁷

³⁶ Studies suggest that faculty members with heavy teaching loads are less likely to do research and, when they do, focus on quantity rather than quality in their research. Kanybek Nur-tegan, Sanjay Venugopalan, and Jessica Young, "Teaching Load and Other Determinants of Research Output Among Teaching Faculty," *The American Economist*, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0569434520930702>. For a discussion on scam journals, see Jeffrey Beall, "Predatory Publishers are Corrupting Open Access," *Nature*, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://www.nature.com/articles/489179a> and Scott Lapinski, "Q: How can I tell whether a certain journal might be a predatory scam operation," Harvard Countway Library, accessed August 7, 2023, <https://asklib.hms.harvard.edu/faq/222404>.

A vice president of research of a research university commented to me that publication records depend on the prestigiousness of the journals. As long as the journal is not a scam journal, teaching professors keeping their research skills honed are worthy of institutional support even when they publish in lesser journals. Some research on teaching loads versus research only considers peer-reviewed articles. Linda Jonker and Martin Hicks, "Teaching Loads and Research Outputs of Ontario University Faculty Members: Implications for Productivity and Differentiation," Higher Education Council of Ontario, March 11, 2014, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FINAL-Teaching-Loads-and-Research-Outputs-ENG.pdf>. There is legitimacy to this practice because the article has been vetted by other academic specialists in the field.

³⁷ A system of adding to the researchers' remuneration may be a powerful motivator for research. Jay R. Schuster, "A Spectrum of Pay for Performance: How to Motivate Employees," *Management of Personnel Quarterly*, Autumn 1969, accessed August 12, 2023, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/hrm.3930080305>. Studies since Schuster have questioned whether pay bonuses increase research productivity. One such assessment is Paul Suff, Peter Reilly, and Annette Cox, "Paying for Performance: New trends in performance-related pay," Institute for Employment Studies, accessed August 11, 2023, <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/paying-performance#:~:text=New%20trends%20in%20performance%2Drelated%20pay&text=The%20authors%20argue%20that%20PRP,assessing%20performance%20against%20individual%20objectives>.

Faculty members who make contributions to the knowledge of their fields should be affirmed. Probably the most appreciated recognition would be confirmation of research as a value and increasing support for research. Providing this recognition requires intention; the institution's administration, prompted by the academic dean, should aspire to be known for both careful teaching and quality research.

Conclusion

Christian researchers can explore the range of life. As Augustine stated in the fourth century, "All truth is God's truth."³⁸ There is no subject that Christians researchers should fear. If they tackle the big questions of their generation in a thoughtful manner, they may add another dimension of thought and evidence to contemporary cultures. Their lens is their relationship with God and obedience to his word. For example, one of the most pressing questions for both Christians and contemporary culture is whether a working relationship between tolerance and religious belief is possible. Perhaps biblical scholars and Christian philosophers could work this question out in a persuasive manner that honours God. Their efforts would be welcome; the church needs academically trained specialists who can produce conclusions the world can respect because, although belief inspired, the methodology mirrors their methodology.

Institutions should develop a conception of new hires both as developing teachers and nascent researchers. If that is the case, the years the new hires have spent in graduate schools as adults, working toward a terminal degree that trains them for research but qualifies them to be hired as teachers, will not be wasted. This article acquaints them with the institutional terrain in which they will develop their careers. In most institutions, faculty members control the academic atmosphere and quality, facilitated by the academic administration. Research development, then, can become a goal shared by faculty members, academic administrators, and the president of the institution, and development of research supports will be intentional.

³⁸ "We may plunder the Egyptians because all truth is God's truth." *Augustine's Confessions, Book 7, Sections 9b-10*. John Calvin affirmed that truth is truth, wherever it is found (John Calvin. *Institutes* 2.2.13,20). Herman Bavinck brought this conviction to the contemporary world in *Reformed Dogmatics*, 20:209-10.

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