



Council on  
Library and  
Information  
Resources

## **Supporting Humanities Doctoral Student Success: A Collaborative Project between Cornell University Library and Columbia University Libraries**

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### **I. Introduction**

It is well documented that doctoral students in the humanities take longer to complete their programs and drop out at a higher rate than do students in the sciences and social sciences. In recent years, several large-scale projects have studied the issue, including the Council of Graduate Schools Ph.D. Completion Project (Council of Graduate Schools 2008), the Graduate Education Initiative funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Ehrenberg et al., 2009), and the National Research Council Assessment of Research Doctoral Programs (NRC 2010). These studies are complemented by others: the National Science Foundation tracks the number of degrees awarded in its annual *Survey of Earned Doctorates* (SED) and produces other reports such as *Time to Degree of U.S. Research Doctorate Recipients Report* (Hoffer and Welch 2006).

Results from these projects, as well as other smaller studies, confirm that:

- The number of doctoral degrees awarded in the humanities declined by 12% between 1998 and 2008, while those in science and engineering increased by 20.4% (2008 NSF SED).
- While the mean registered time-to-degree in all disciplines has increased since 1978, it is still the longest in the humanities, which reached 9.0 years in 2003, compared to 6.9 in engineering, 6.9 in the life sciences, and 6.8 in the physical sciences (Hoffer and Welch 2006).
- The degree-completion rate within a 10-year period for humanities doctoral students is 49%, compared with 55% for mathematics and physical sciences, 56% for the social sciences, 63% for the life sciences, and 64% for engineering (Council of Graduate Schools 2008).
- The cumulative attrition rate at year 10 in the humanities is 32%, compared with 27% in engineering and 26% in the life sciences (Council of Graduate Schools 2008).
- The factors that influence time-to-completion and retention rates vary according to discipline, institutional characteristics, availability of financial aid, quality of advising, clarity of program requirements, quality of family life, job prospects, lack of community, etc. (Ehrenberg et al., 2009).

To investigate the needs of their institutions' doctoral students in the humanities and determine whether the library can influence student success, the Cornell University Library and Columbia University Libraries conducted a collaborative ethnographic user needs study. The study was supported by grants from the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, the Council on Library and Information Resources, and funding from the two universities' graduate schools.

Joining two principal investigators on the project team were 12 library staff members from libraries at Columbia and Cornell, 7 students, and an administrative assistant.

Columbia graduate students were hired to assist with the interviews and coding of transcripts, and Cornell students were hired to transcribe audio recordings of the interviews. Eleven members from both institutions participated in the study from its beginning with ethnographic training, protocol and questionnaire development, interview facilitation, transcript coding, and data analysis.

## II. Methods

The students interviewed were placed in one of two groups: those who had not yet taken their qualifying exams (pre-exam) and those who had advanced to doctoral candidacy (post-exam). Two recent Cornell Ph.D. recipients were also among the interviewees. Students were recruited through department e-mail lists with consent from the targeted departments (Table 1) and through announcements posted in areas heavily trafficked by graduate students. Students participated either in one of five focus groups (n=27) conducted between both institutions, or in individual interviews (n=45), totaling 72 participants for the study. All students were compensated for their participation.

Data gathered from the focus groups were used to refine the two interview protocols (pre- and post-exam) used in the study ([Appendix 1](#)). Written questionnaires were developed and administered at the end of each focus group or interview ([Appendix 2](#)). The results presented here are based solely on an analysis of the interviews and the written questionnaire results.

Forty-five individual interviews were conducted and recorded. Two interviews were held by telephone; the other 43 were conducted in person by teams of two library staff members. The sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

The initial focus was students enrolled in English, religion, history, and classics programs, but participation was expanded to include other humanities disciplines. History and English were the only two disciplines to overlap and contributed the highest number of participants. Participating disciplines unique to Columbia included art history and religion; disciplines unique to Cornell included Asian studies and Asian religions, classics, comparative literature, and medieval studies (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Number of students participating in interviews by discipline, age, gender, status, and advanced degrees

	Columbia		Columbia TOTAL	Cornell		Cornell TOTAL	Combined TOTAL
	Male	Female		Male	Female		
	9	15	24	6	15	21	45
<b>Disciplines</b>							
<b>Art History</b>	3	4	7	0	0	0	7
<b>Asian Studies</b>			0	1	1	2	2
<b>Classics</b>			0	2		2	2
<b>Comparative Literature</b>			0	2		2	2
<b>English</b>	2	4	6	2	2	4	10
<b>History</b>	1	4	5	1	6	7	12
<b>Medieval Studies</b>					4	4	4
<b>Religion</b>	3	3	6			0	6

<b>Stage</b>							
<b>Pre-exam</b>	5	3	<b>8</b>	3	6	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Post-exam</b>	4	12	<b>16</b>	3	9	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Advanced Degrees</b>							
<b>Yes MA</b>	4	9	<b>13</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>No MA</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>	1	9	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>

The interviews were transcribed with the aid of the Start-Stop Universal software. Each transcript was reviewed by a member of the project team. Four team members coordinated the creation of a code book ([Appendix 3](#)), code term definitions, and coding guidelines. Each transcript was coded independently by two team members using the indexing function of Microsoft Word. The results were then compared, discussed, and reconciled to an acceptable common coding framework. Teams from both institutions participated in multiple video and phone conferences to discuss the analysis process and preliminary findings and to ascertain the most important dimensions emerging from the initial analysis.

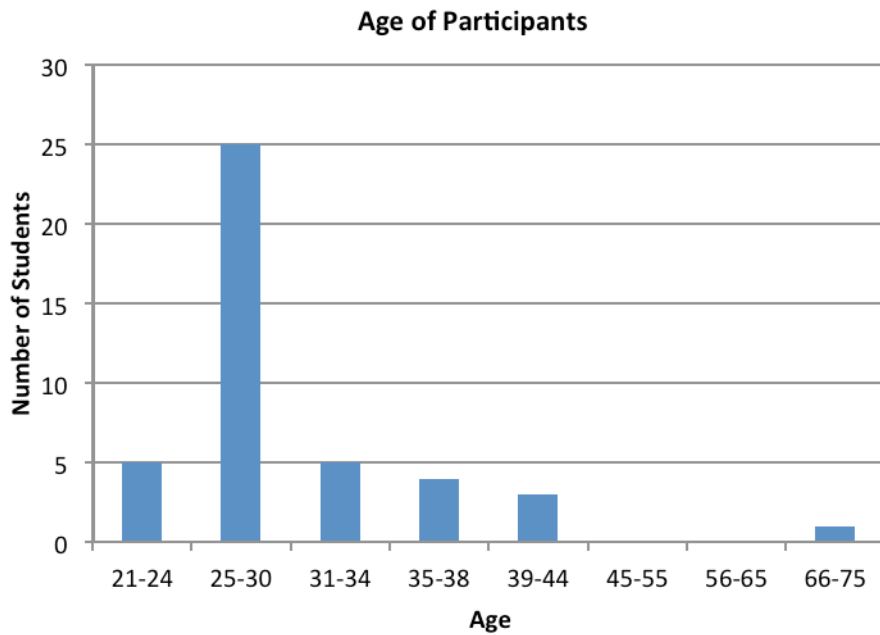
### **III. Demographic Data and Written Questionnaire Analysis**

The following analysis is derived from self-reported data collected from the questionnaires distributed after the interviews. The analysis includes demographic, satisfaction, and library use data covering library resources, services, and space.

It became clear early on that there is no such thing as a typical humanities doctoral student. The 45 subjects varied widely in age. Their academic backgrounds and experience with libraries, archives, and academic writing likewise vary dramatically. Almost two-thirds of participants had advanced to doctoral candidacy (Table 1). Some were recent doctoral candidates; others were writing their dissertations. Over half had earned advanced degrees (typically a master's degree) before starting their doctoral program (Table 1). Some of these degrees were earned from international institutions. Some participants reported that the coursework and thesis completed for their previous degree did not provide a rigorous research experience, while others reported completing a lengthy, research-intensive thesis process. Understanding the range of academic preparation these students bring to their programs is invaluable for improving library support.

#### **AGE AND GENDER**

Interviewees ranged in age from 21 to 75 years (Figure 1). The average age was 30.6 years, but without the oldest student, it drops to 29.5 years. Two-thirds of participants were female (Table 1).

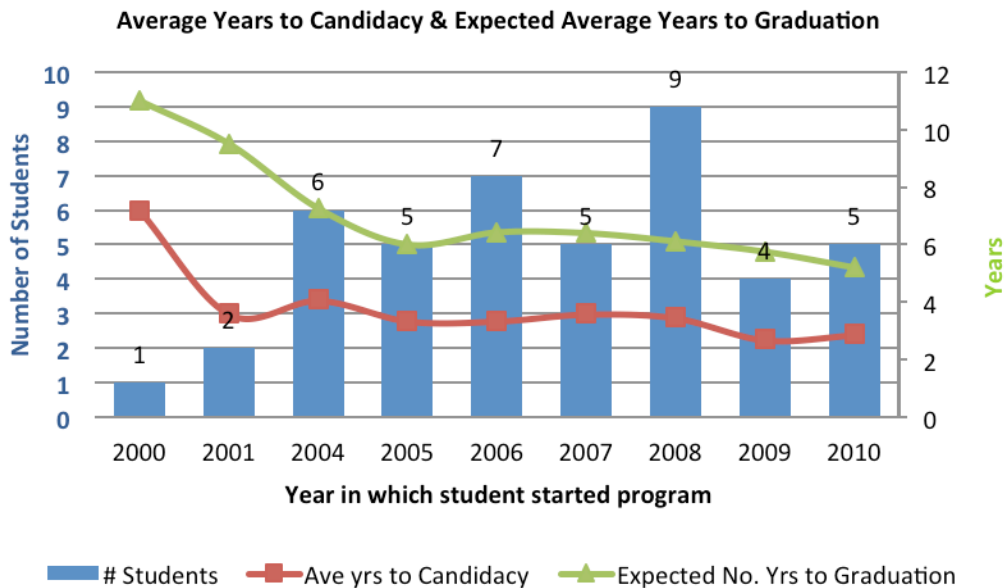


**Figure 1.** Distribution of participation

#### TIME IN DOCTORAL PROGRAM

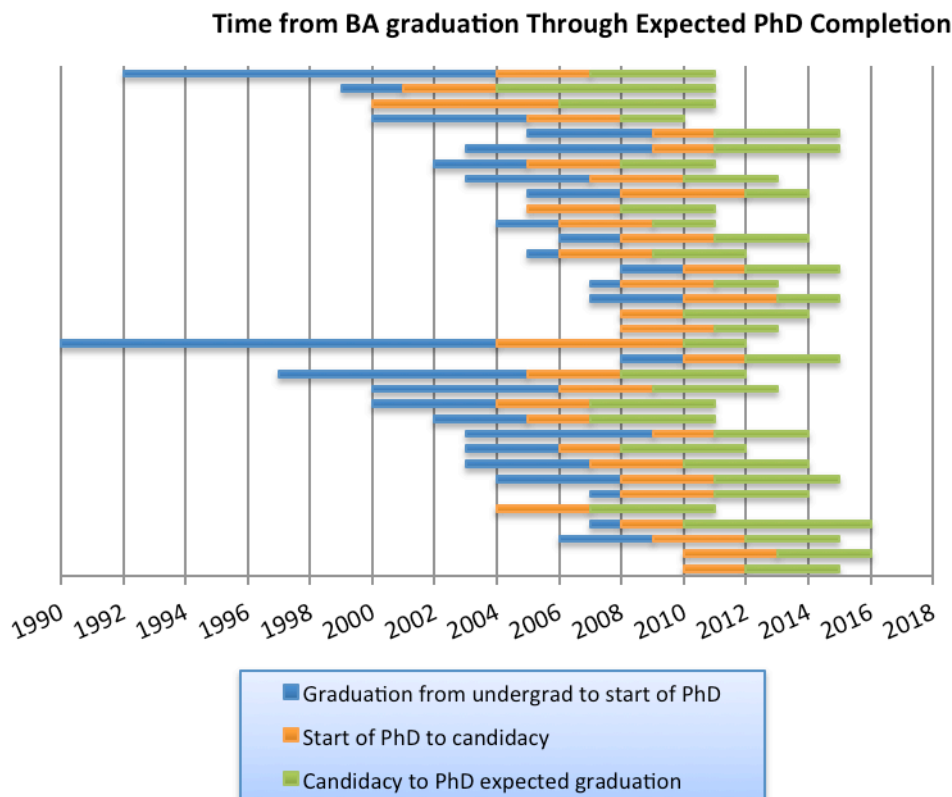
On average, the interviewees took or expect to take about 3.0 years to achieve candidacy (passing oral and written exams) and 6.4 years to graduate. In Figure 2, the bars represent the number of students who started the program that year, and the red and green lines represent the average number of years students took or expect to take to achieve candidacy and their expected number of years to graduation, respectively. Since 2007, the average number of years to achieve candidacy has decreased from 3.0 to 2.4 years. Newer students are more optimistic regarding the years to degree completion than those who have been enrolled for a longer time.

On average, participants had been enrolled in their programs for three years.



**Figure 2.** Average number (or expected average) of years to achieve candidacy and average number (or expected average) of years to graduation

Figure 3 illustrates the trajectory of the academic training for 34 of the participants for whom sufficient data were collected. The figure displays the time between their completion of the bachelor degree to the beginning of their current graduate program (blue portion of bar). The average length of this time is 3.2 years. The orange portion illustrates the duration or expected duration of the first phase of their current degree program: coursework and time to candidacy. The average length of this time is 2.9 years. The green portion represents the expected duration from the time of candidacy to completion of their doctorate. The average length of this time is projected to be 3.4 years. Of course, the reality of the estimated length of the writing period could vary dramatically from the students' expectations.

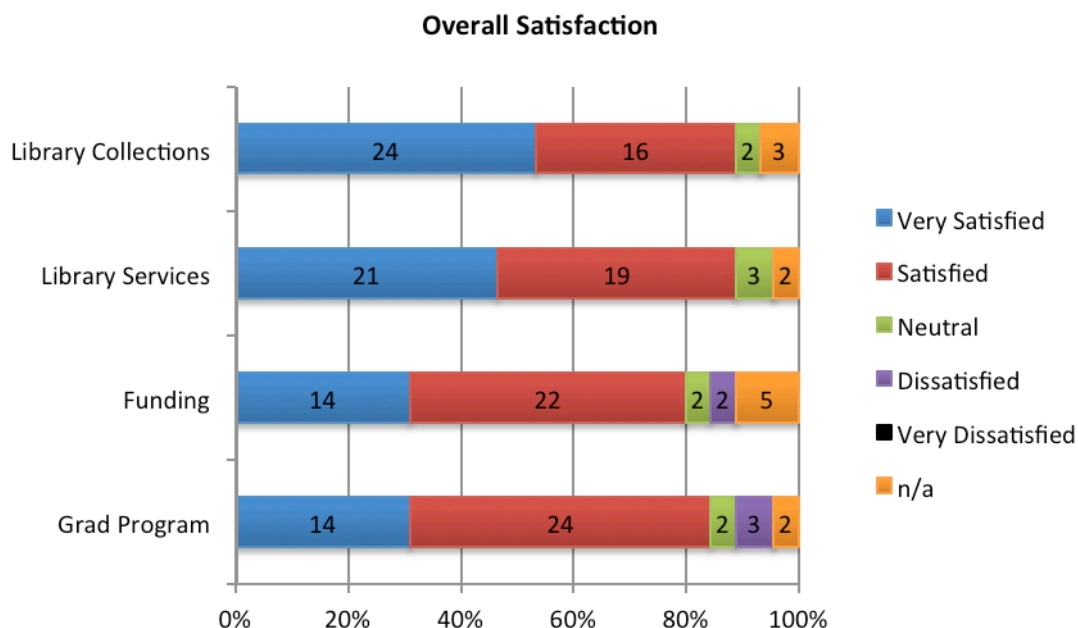


**Figure 3.** Duration of education from receiving a Bachelor's degree through expected completion of doctorate

## SATISFACTION

Overall, the participants at both universities are satisfied with their academic program, the level of funding they have received, library collections, and library services (Figure 4). Approximately 84% of participants reported satisfaction with their academic programs. Surprisingly, 4 out of 5 (80%) of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the level of funding they have received thus far. It should be noted, however, that funding received the highest number of nonresponses, with five students opting not to report data on this item. Six participants reported that they have an "outside job" that provides income. Eighty-eight percent of participants reported being satisfied or

very satisfied with library services, and 88% are satisfied or very satisfied with library collections.

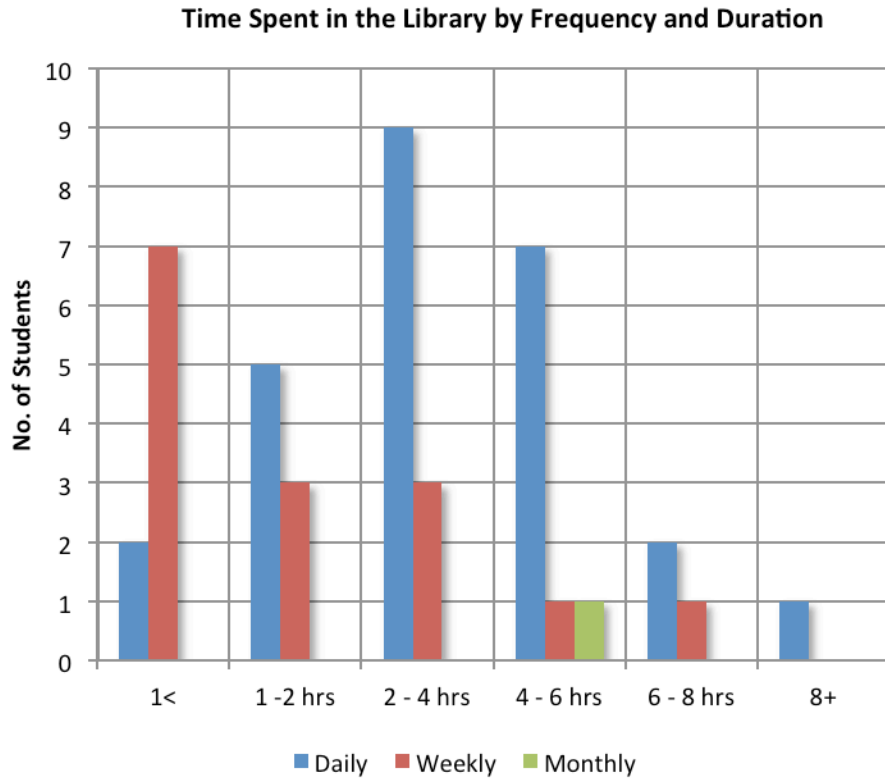


**Figure 4.** Degree of satisfaction with program, funding, library collections, and library services

#### LIBRARY USE

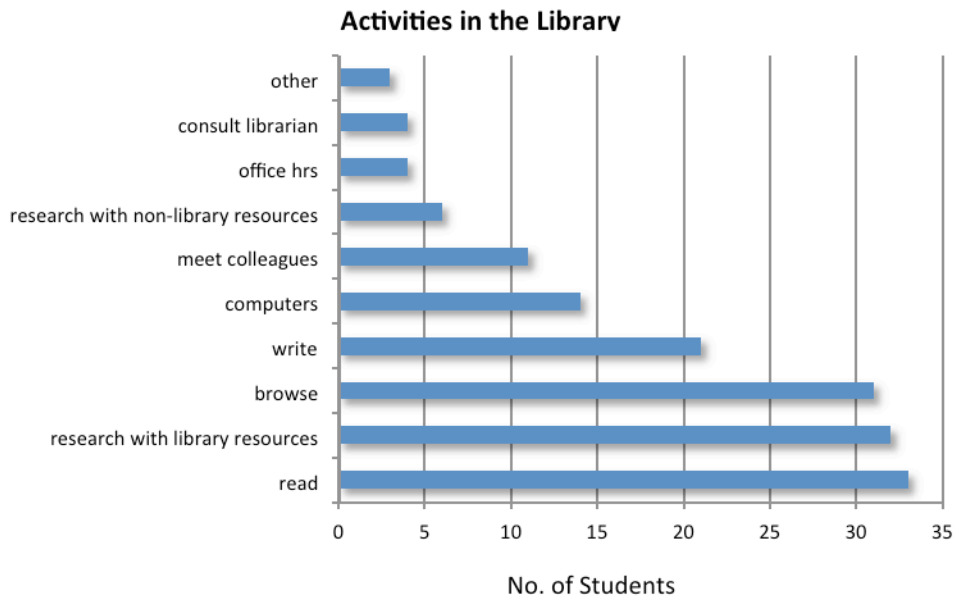
All participants reported using the physical libraries at least monthly. Daily visits are more common than weekly or monthly visits, with 26 participants reporting daily library use and 14 reporting weekly use (Figure 5). Only one participant reported visiting the library less than weekly.

The students use library physical spaces extensively. Figure 5 shows the number of hours spent in the library, against the frequency of those visits. In those daily visits, students typically spend between two and six hours in the library. Many weekly users spend less than an hour in the library when they visit; the rest of the weekly users tend to spend up to four hours. About 9% reported typically spending six or more hours per visit to the library.

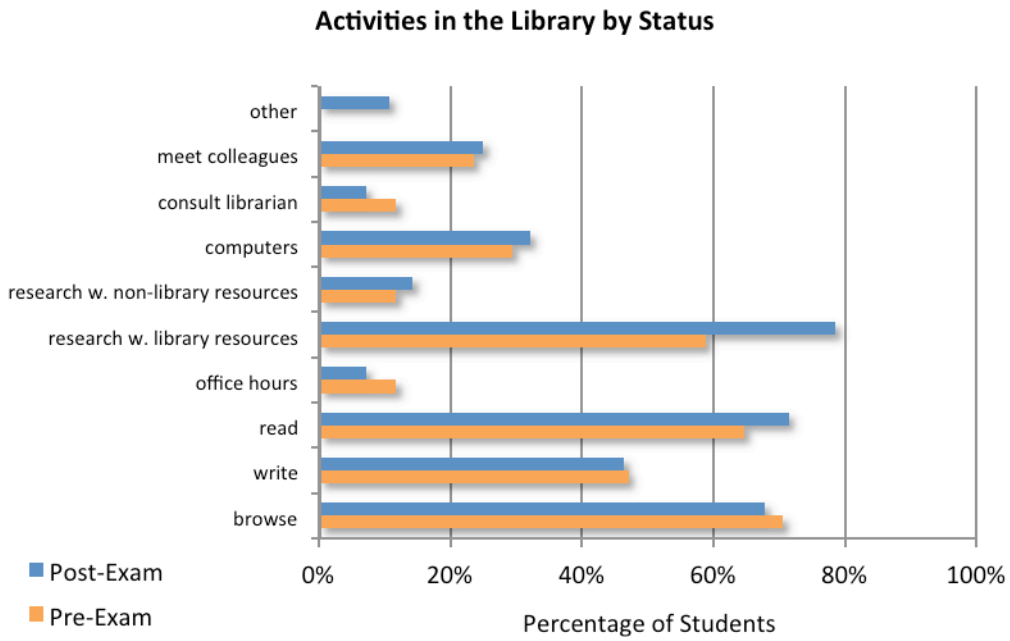


**Figure 5.** Time spent in the library by duration (number of hours) and frequency of visits

Students reported engaging in diverse activities in the library, the top three of which are reading, doing research using library resources, and browsing collections (Figure 6). Both pre- and post-exam students identified browsing collections as one of their most frequent activities (Figure 7). For both groups, reading is the second most frequent activity conducted at the library. Notably, writing is not the top reported activity of students at the post-exam stage, nor is it in the top three activities students at this level perform at the library. A higher percentage of post-exam students (20% more) reported conducting research using library resources at the library (Figure 7). About 5% more pre-exam than post-exam students reported consulting with a librarian while at the library (Figure 7).



**Figure 6.** Activities on library visits



**Figure 7.** Activities in the library by status



## **IV. Discussion**

Interviews revealed that even though there is no typical humanities doctoral student, the interviewees do share certain institutional and library-related concerns. While interviewees confirmed the importance of funding, jobs after graduation, and the quality of their relationship with their faculty adviser as prerequisites for completing their degrees in a timely fashion, their comments on what the library does and might do to contribute to their success were of particular interest. The five major opportunities for libraries that emerged from the interviews were: (1) providing space, (2) fostering community, (3) providing access to deep research collections, (4) providing research assistance, (5) and nurturing the development of scholars. Each of these areas is discussed below, and is followed by a list of major opportunities for libraries to better support doctoral students in the humanities. Because of the qualitative nature of the study, it was not possible to order these opportunities in order of priority. All the themes emerged as important, and participants did not rate them relative to each other.

### **1. Provide space**

For interviewees, the library is an important support structure. They view library facilities as important campus environments where they research, study, read, write, and socialize. The availability and quality of workspace were major factors in their productivity and academic success.

Although expressing a wide range of opinions on space, the interviewees generally agree on two issues: (1) the need for comfortable study/research space; and (2) the need to minimize distractions within study spaces. All requested more comfortable study spaces. Some called for spaces with large tables on which they could spread their work, while others preferred the seclusion of a carrel. Chief among the space-related challenges was the lack of dedicated carrels. Students complained about carrels being monopolized by undergraduate students; small, physically uninviting carrels located in poorly lit areas; and carrels located near high-traffic areas.

Despite the need for seclusion, the interviewees appreciated seeing other doctoral students working in the library. The benefits of working among other doctoral students were especially significant at the beginning of their tenure, when students rely on one another for insight and advice.

Major opportunities for libraries related to space include the need for:

- dedicated spaces for doctoral students that promote academic and social community building;
- spaces that could be reserved by doctoral students for writing groups, dissertation discussion groups, etc;
- quiet individual study areas with appropriate lighting, power, and security; and
- 24/7 access to study/research spaces used by graduate students.

### **2. Foster community**

Interviewees expressed a strong need for communities of support. They identified two types of community with overlapping elements—the intellectual/academic and the social/emotional.

The intellectual/academic sphere refers to the environment fostered in a department by activities that promote an intellectual atmosphere based on participation by faculty and students. Community activities include workshops, colloquia, speaker series, museum visits, and discussion groups that meet outside of the classroom and are often unrelated to specific courses. Peer communities also play an important role; students underscored

the importance of having a community of peers to “bounce off ideas,” support dissertation writing, and offer peer advising.

The social/emotional community refers to the network of support that students rely on to counterbalance the intensity of their academic programs. The desire to participate in academic and social communities was seen as an antidote to the sense of personal and intellectual isolation that many students experience, particularly after they have completed their coursework. Advantages to community membership included the prestige of belonging to a highly regarded department, the widening circle of their academic world, and the practical advice received from peers.

Many students expressed frustration because they lacked the requisite information to meet departmental and institutional requirements. Some preferred to rely on their peers rather than on faculty advisers to navigate the intricacies of administrative details. Similarly, students expressed concern about their unfamiliarity with procedures associated with creating documents needed for advancement, such as a reading list for their qualifying exams or a prospectus for a dissertation, publication, or conference paper.

These reported needs point to obvious opportunities for collaboration between libraries, academic departments, schools and colleges, and other campus agencies. The library already offers several workshops geared directly to graduate student needs (e.g., managing citations, finding funding sources). These offerings could be expanded in partnership with other relevant campus units.

Major opportunities for libraries related to the fostering of community include:

- working with campus partners, positioning the library as a referral hub or single point of entry, offering guidance in a wide range of areas important to graduate student success;
- serving as a repository of sample collections of academic documentation and offering guidelines or best practices for preparing reading lists, prospectuses, etc.; and
- offering training on developing, understanding, and mastering the documentation of doctoral projects.

### **3. Provide access to deep research collections**

Use of library collections varied widely among students, disciplines, and research topics. Many students entered their programs with extensive experience researching in libraries, while others reported limited experience. Most interviewees cited the strength of library collections as one of the reasons, or even the reason, they chose their doctoral program. Many noted they were able to find anything they needed, either locally or via a resource-sharing option. The Borrow Direct interlibrary loan service was repeatedly cited as an asset.

Attitudes toward e-books varied. Only one interviewee reported owning an e-reader. Many opposed the thought of using e-readers or e-books; others embraced them. Most preferred to read print content, but many preferred the convenience of having books available digitally anywhere, anytime.

As access to the full scholarly record in multiple formats is perceived as necessary for a successful academic career, the opportunities for libraries in this area clearly lie in expanding resource-sharing partnerships and borrowing arrangements. Expanding the

types of materials allowed for borrowing and lending, such as audio and video formats and primary source materials, could reduce the need for travel. Improving the discoverability and accessibility of physical and electronic collections would increase their utility for graduate students.

Major opportunities for libraries related to providing access to deep research collections include:

- making channels for graduate students' purchase suggestions more visible, and ensuring that resources mentioned as missing are purchased;
- working with vendors and publishers to increase the usability of e-books (PDFs, downloadable, no restrictions, and a standard format);
- improving search and discovery interfaces, including library catalogs, websites, database platforms, and the interconnections between them; and
- expanding the types of materials allowed for borrowing and lending, such as audio and video formats and primary source materials.

#### **4. Provide research, information management, and teaching expertise assistance**

Interviewees noted that they receive research assistance from faculty advisers, other faculty members, librarians, and student peers. Their opinions about the value of librarians and the assistance they provide were wide-ranging. Some envisioned a holistic and complementary relationship between themselves and library services: i.e., that the resources provided are extensive and that a librarian's expertise is needed to take full advantage of them. But some questioned the continued utility of librarians, asking why a librarian's assistance is still needed, given the convenience of online research tools and availability of faculty expertise. Those who valued interactions with librarians stated that subject librarians' deep knowledge of disciplinary literatures was of particular importance. Students discussed the need to grasp how the literature within their discipline is organized—an understanding that subject librarians seem uniquely positioned to impart. There is clearly an opportunity for targeted outreach providing doctoral students with grounding in the organization of scholarly literature at the discipline level, including researching archival and other primary source materials.

Most discussions of information management needs focused on the importance of citation-management techniques and tools. Although almost all students were aware of citation management tools such as RefWorks, EndNote, and Zotero, many spoke about wanting to use these tools, rather than actually using them. Many had developed their own approaches to citation management because of their frustration with online citation management tools. Also of note was the range of responses to questions relating to the use of e-books and e-book readers. Most interviewees expressed frustration in having to navigate the large variety of e-book formats. Although most respondents preferred print to electronic media, many cited the need for tools to manage their expanding personal e-libraries. Questions about their file management habits elicited a wide range of responses. Respondents had adopted highly idiosyncratic approaches to managing their research information using a wide range of software products. Many reported frustration with or ignorance of effective note-taking strategies. For some, this frustration sprung from difficulties related to bridging the physical/virtual divide (e.g., "How do I annotate my PDF without printing it out?"), but many simply wanted help in taking bibliographic notes and in finding a way to link their notes to bibliographies built within citation management tools. Most students talked to their peers and advisers and used "trial and error" while seeking options, but none discussed consulting librarians or technologists.

When asked to evaluate the library as a resource for their own teaching needs, many

students cited the importance of reserve readings and hoped that they might use library space for holding office hours. Many praised librarians for offering library instruction sessions and creating customized online research guides for their classes. Several had arranged for their students to receive an introduction to working with primary source materials and rare-book collections. A number discussed the connections they had made with specific librarians through the process of arranging library instruction for their classes—connections that had sometimes evolved into important research partnerships. Surprisingly, institutional writing programs seemed to have less-than-systematic approaches to recommending library instruction as part of teaching curricula, suggesting that stronger partnerships with these programs could move graduate students to integrate library instruction into their curricula more regularly. Several students pointed to the need for an online repository of teaching materials and learning objects, including library and research instruction materials. Some suggested that this repository could be expanded beyond learning objects to include other types of content, such as sample dissertations, proposals, and syllabi.

Funding was identified as the single greatest factor in doctoral student attrition rate as well as a source of significant stress. Many students did not know how to search for grant or fellowship funding opportunities outside of their own institution. Many reported frustration in identifying outside funding to support travel for research and language acquisition, opportunities for non-U.S. citizens, and writing fellowships.

Major opportunities for libraries related to providing research, information management, and teaching expertise assistance include:

- working with academic departments to promote awareness of subject librarian services;
- taking advantage of events sponsored by academic departments and libraries as occasions for librarians to interact with graduate students and promote library services;
- offering services, workshops, and/or online instruction in
  - citation management tools;
  - note-taking techniques and applications;
  - file management;
  - archival and primary source research and working in foreign libraries and archives;
  - e-book options, including maintaining an e-book library, PDF management, and e-book hardware and software options;
- working with writing programs to ensure that all graduate instructors know that librarians can provide research support for their classes;
- working with writing centers to create and maintain a learning objects repository for instructors in writing programs; and
- working with other campus units to identify grant and fellowship opportunities.

## **5. Developing scholarly identity**

The students' academic backgrounds, approaches to research and writing, and experiences using libraries and archives were highly varied. Nonetheless, the interviewees identified several recurrent themes. First, students often discussed the nature of their largely self-determined schedules and approaches to time management. Second, they described the expectations placed on them, often tacitly, to publish and participate in professional activities such as conferences. They also focused on their own levels of personal academic assurance, which varied widely.

Regarding time management, students imparted concerns about planning their paths to degree completion as well as concerns about organizing their daily schedules. Although some students felt that the ability to set their own schedules is critical to their success, others found this freedom challenging and sought structure.

For many students, the transition from qualifying exams to candidacy marked a major shift in terms of time management and proved a critical benchmark in their progress. They emphasized that the post-exam period, characterized by a departure from the structure of coursework, required ongoing discipline and motivation. While some students work irregular hours or live in a perpetual state of scholarly engagement, most attempt to regulate their work according to a fixed schedule

Professionalization was identified as a key component of scholarly development. Many students perceived publication and conference participation as valuable intellectual experiences. Most viewed publishing as a prerequisite to entering the academic job market. Some students reported being discouraged from publishing by faculty members because of the fear that they may publish subpar work or lose momentum on their dissertations. Others, however, recounted receiving strong encouragement from faculty. Often, conflicting advice was offered to the same student by different faculty members within the same department.

The interviewees reported various levels of academic self-assurance. Some expressed high levels of self-confidence, while others were apprehensive about their progress. The former drew on personal feelings of certainty about their career paths or previous academic successes. The latter often expressed concern that their previous academic training had not prepared them for completing their dissertations.

Recognizing the variety of perspectives, experience, and motivation that students bring to their work will enable libraries to provide the most thoughtful support possible. The interviews revealed that each student is working within a web of personal circumstances that have may have an immense impact on his or her success. One cannot make assumptions about the levels of academic or professional experience that students bring to their programs. Nonetheless, this analysis suggests a number of recommendations that may improve the doctoral student experience. Many of these recommendations would be best pursued in collaboration with academic departments and other campus agencies.

Major opportunities for libraries related to supporting professional scholarly identity include:

- hosting writing or discussion groups to inspire increased productivity during the dissertation-writing process;
- offering time-management workshops;
- working with academic departments to establish best practices for students who wish to publish before graduation;
- assigning librarians to doctoral students as library mentors or "personal librarians," available to consult on research, writing, publication, and discipline-specific literatures, and connect them to other campus support services; and
- creating mentorship experiences that enable seasoned students to give advice to newer students.

## **V. Conclusion**

This study revealed five broad areas of interest to doctoral students in the humanities concerning the challenges they face in completing their academic programs. Students

emphasized the importance of space for individual study as well as group activities. They stressed the need for communities of support for promoting their academic success and emotional well-being. Most voiced satisfaction with the information resources available to them, but their attitudes about e-books, e-readers, and the transition to e-content were mixed. Students expressed varied opinions about the continued utility of librarians, while also communicating their need for assistance with information management strategies and their frustration with citation management applications. Funding was the single greatest factor affecting degree completion, but many students were unaware of how to search for funding opportunities outside their home institutions. Finally, students conveyed their concerns about project and time management, publishing and professional engagement, and their confidence in themselves as developing scholars.

The major opportunities identified in each of these thematic areas will be discussed with library management and other staff groups on both campuses to determine the feasibility of addressing them. At Columbia, the implementation of recommendations from this study will coincide with the further development of the Digital Humanities Center within the Humanities & History Libraries division. The data gathered from the interviews and the opportunities outlined above will directly influence program and facilities planning for the renovated facility. At Cornell, the recommendations will inform the feasibility of planning an immersion program for graduate students in the humanities who have completed at least one semester of their programs. The program is envisioned as an active collaboration between the library and other campus units. There is also interest from libraries serving the sciences, social sciences, and professional schools at both Columbia and Cornell in understanding whether the opportunities identified in this study are transferable to improving support for doctoral student success more broadly.

This study provided a wealth of data, and further data analysis is likely. If the findings and recommendations prove useful for service improvement, there might be value in extending the study to other disciplines.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Post Exam Interview Protocol Example**

**I. Introduction**

1. You are a X year graduate student in the field of ..... Can you tell me a little bit about your dissertation topic?
2. What expectations did you have about the graduate program when you started?

**II. Dissertation preparation & process**

3. What year did you stop taking courses?
4. What expectations did you have for your progress after finishing coursework? Have you had to adjust those expectations?
5. What expectations were articulated for you by your department or advisor when you became ABD/passed exams/defended your prospectus?
6. How do you organize your academic work, and your time, since you've completed your coursework/exams or defended your prospectus?
7. Did you have to submit a proposal/prospectus? Can you tell us about the proposal preparation?
8. You submitted your prospectus/proposal, and what happened afterwards? What would you change or do over?
9. Have you started working on your dissertation? How do you expect to proceed? Have you changed dissertation topics? How did that impact your timeline?
10. In an ideal world, how long would the dissertation take you to complete? What do you think will be/is the most challenging?

**III. Research & Writing for prospectus/dissertation**

11. In your research you mentioned you used .....[books, articles, microfilm].... Did you find most of these in our collections or visit other ones? Which primary or secondary resources have you used? How did you find out about them? Have you used collections in other countries?
12. What was of greatest assistance to you in this research process?
13. Have you written an MA thesis? How is that experience influencing your approach to your dissertation?
14. Is there an expectation to publish before you graduate? Have you published material based on your dissertation research? Congratulations! What did you publish? Can you tell us about this process?

**IV. The Library, Writing, Research**

15. When was the last time you were working on your dissertation? What did you do? Where were you? And, the time before that?
16. That last time that you were writing portions of your dissertation, how many hours in a day did you spend writing? And, the time before that?
17. When was the last time you went to the library?
18. What is it about the library that is conducive to accomplishing your work?
19. Where do you do most of your writing? Do you use the same place for studying? Where else do you like to write and/or study?

20. When was the last time you used the library What did you do?
21. When was the last time you used the library website/databases? And, the time before that? Where were you when you used the library website? (remote access?)
22. In the course of doing your research, have you had librarians assist you in this process? Can you tell us what it was for?
23. In the last year, which top three services of the library have been particularly helpful to you?

#### **V. Technology Use**

24. How do you feel about e-books? Do you own a reader? Do you use it for your research?
25. Do you use the computers on campus (library or elsewhere) to write your dissertation/do research? If not, what do you use?  
What hardware or software do you wish you had access to, to help you with your research and writing?

#### **VI. Teaching**

26. In what way has the library helped you in your teaching responsibilities? Can you give us specific example(s)?
27. When you are teaching (TAing or serving as primary instructor), how do you organized your time to fit with your dissertation demands?
28. Are there any other significant demands on your time outside of your academic/research commitments?

#### **VII. Overall Outlook**

29. You have probably heard that some students have left the program without finishing. Why do you think that is? Have you ever considered not finishing?
30. If you had to articulate for someone else, say a prospective student, the strengths of your program, what would you say? What about the challenges?
31. In your estimate, what are the most important factors that will guarantee that you complete your program, and do so in a timely manner?
32. If the library gave you a magic wand to help you finish and graduate, what would you ask it to do for you?



## Appendix 2

### Post Interview Written Questionnaire

Note: Full questionnaire available upon request. Choices for each question are significantly pared down.

1. Your name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender: Female Male Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### About Your Program

4. Date of graduation with a BA/BS or equivalent undergraduate degree:
5. What department are you in at CU (circle one)?  
History Medieval Studies Religion  
English Classics other
6. What year did you begin graduate studies at CU? \_\_\_\_\_  
Did you earn a Master's Degree prior to beginning graduates studies at CU? Yes No  
What semester did you achieve candidacy by passing your qualifying exams?  
Year: \_\_\_\_\_ ; Semester: Fall Spring Summer Winter.  
  
Or if you have not taken your qualifying exams yet, when do you expect to?  
Year: \_\_\_\_\_ ; Semester: Fall Spring Summer Winter.
7. When do you expect to complete your Phd studies, and graduate?
8. Are you seeking an academic position? Yes No Don't know
9. Do you receive financial support from CU for the academic year?
  - a. I do not receive financial support
  - b. I do receive financial support for the academic year in the amount of (choose one):
    - i. Less than \$5,000 per academic year
    - ii. \$5,000 - \$10,000 per academic year, etc..
  - c. I do receive financial support (circled above) toward the following (choose one):
    - i. Tuition & fees; etc..
10. Have you received any Summer funding during your program?
  - a. If so, from where and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. This funding supports your \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., tuition & fees, living stipend)
11. Have you received any external funding (non-CU) during your program?
  - a. If so, from where and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. This funding supports your \_\_\_\_\_ (e. .g., tuition & fees, living stipend)
12. Do you have an outside job that provides income? Yes No
13. Do you now, or have you in the past, had teaching responsibilities as part of your program?

- a. Research Assistantship (RA)
- b. Teaching Assistantship (TA), etc

14. If you have had a teaching responsibility, how many semesters did you do this work?

- a. 1 semester
- b. 2 semesters, etc..

15. For each semester that you have had teaching responsibilities, how many sections have you taught or TA'd? (A section is defined here as one class of a course.)

- a. Semester 1: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more
- g. Semester 7: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more, etc.

**Electronic & Mobile Devices**

16. Please tell us about your mobile devices (check the corresponding boxes)

	I own one	I use it every day	I use it for my research & writing
Mac Laptop			
Windows Laptop			
Linux Laptop			

**Library Use**

17. How often do you visit the physical libraries at CU?

- a. Daily
- d. Semesterly, etc...

18. When you visit a library at CU, how long do you usually stay there?

- a. Less than an hour
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-4 hours, etc..

19. When you visit a CU library, what do you usually do? (please circle all that apply)

- a. Browse the stacks or journal collections
- b. Write
- c. Read, etc...

20. Have you visited (or intend to visit) any non-CU libraries to use their collections for your dissertation research? Yes No If so, which library? \_\_\_\_\_

**General Satisfaction – Library & Beyond –**

Very satisfied      Satisfied      Neutral      Dissatisfied      Very dissatisfied

21. Please rate your overall satisfaction with library *services* at CU:

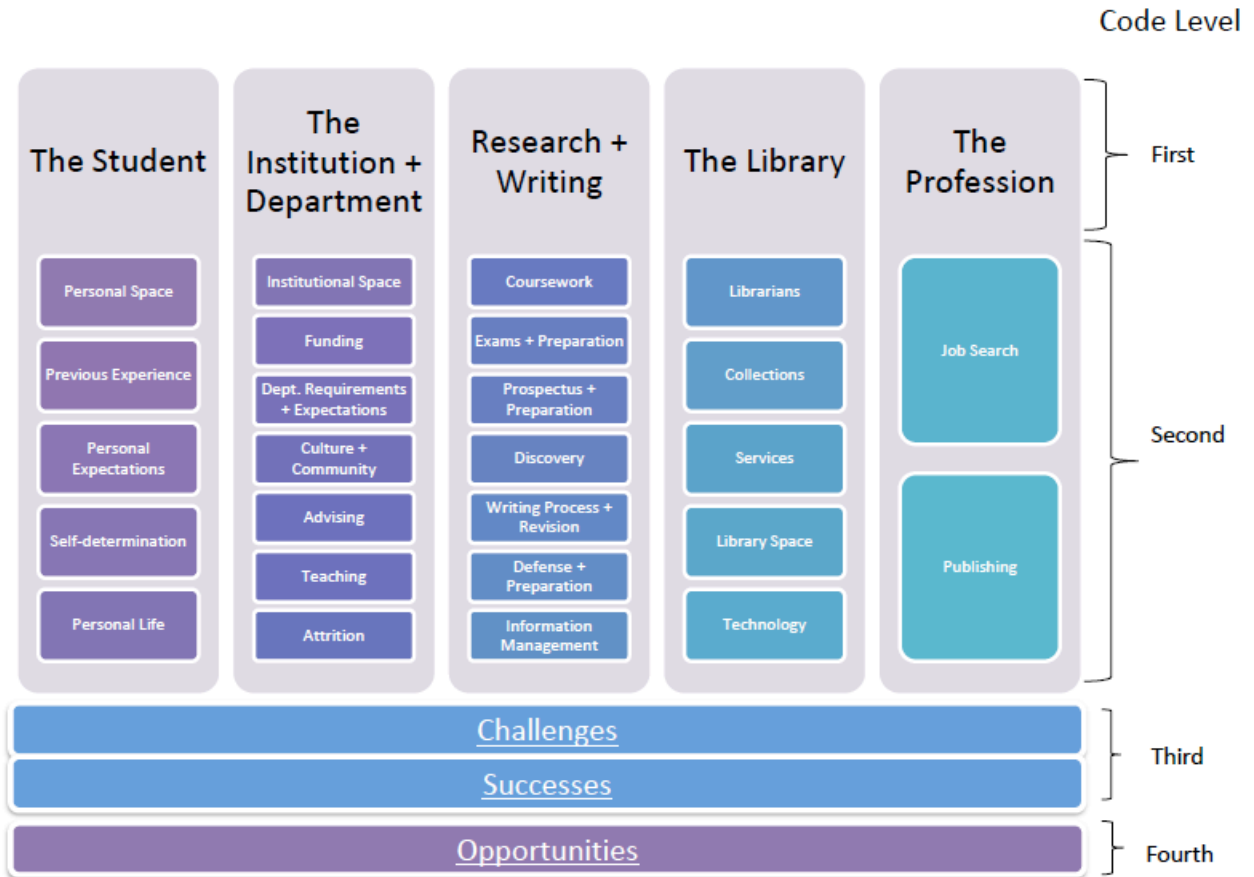
22. Please rate your overall satisfaction with library *collections* at CU:

23. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the *funding support* you've received at CU:

24. Please rate your overall satisfaction with your *graduate program* at CU:

# Appendix 3

## Code Book



## About the Authors

**Gabriela Castro Gessner** is a Research and Assessment Analyst at the Cornell University Library and former reference specialist in the social sciences and humanities library there. Ms. Gessner holds a PhD in anthropological archaeology and an MA in anthropology from SUNY Binghamton. Her research is on assessment of learning outcomes, usability, and user studies, as well as the social production of knowledge, anthropological perspectives on technology, and social archaeology. She has taught at SUNY Cortland, published and presented on user studies and archaeology, and has participated in several excavation projects in Southwest Asia.

**Damon Jaggars** is Associate University Librarian for Collections & Services at the Columbia University Libraries. Previous positions include Associate Director for User Services; Head Librarian, Undergraduate Library; Head of Reference, Undergraduate Library, at the University of Texas at Austin; and Coordinator of Information Technology at Iona College. Mr. Jaggars holds an MS in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a BA in Philosophy from the University of California, Davis. Current research interests include service quality assessment and emerging service models for research and teaching support.

**Jennifer Rutner** is a Senior Analyst at Ithaka S+R, where she provides quantitative support for the research team. Previously, she was the Assessment and Planning Librarian at the Columbia University Libraries, where she established and led the Libraries' assessment program. Ms. Rutner received her MLIS from Pratt Institute. She has published, lectured, and presented on staff development strategies for new librarians, assessment planning and programs, assessment librarianship, faculty perceptions of journal collections, and user needs assessments. She is also chair of the ACRL Assessment Committee.

**Kornelia Tancheva** is the Director of Olin and Uris Libraries and the Library Annex at Cornell University. Previous positions include Director of the Collections, Reference, Instruction, and Outreach Department at Olin/Uris, and Instruction Coordinator at Mann Library, Cornell University. Ms. Tancheva holds a PhD in Drama and Theatre from Cornell University, an MLS from the Syracuse School of Information Studies, and an MA in English Language and Literature from Sofia University, Bulgaria. She teaches classes in drama, theater, and ESL and her research interests include modernism in drama and theater, human-computer interaction, theater in the age of the Internet, as well as qualitative and quantitative assessment of library services.