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The Research Practices of Faculty in Asian Studies: A Local Report by the Harvard Library
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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Harvard University participated in a national study on research practices of academics in Asian studies. The goal of the study was to understand the resources and services these faculty members need to be successful in their research. This study, based on the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, was part of Ithaka S+R’s national effort: Research Support Services Project on Asian Studies. The project is the latest in a series of Ithaka S+R studies. Previous studies focused on scholars in history, chemistry, art history, religion, agriculture, and public health.

Harvard joined a cohort of 11 participating universities: Arizona State University, Claremont Colleges, Harvard University, Indiana University Bloomington, Lafayette College, Trinity University, University of California Los Angeles, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Maryland, University of Texas Austin, and University of Washington.

A portion of Harvard’s anonymized results, along with data from other participating institutions, was submitted to Ithaka S+R for analysis. The aggregated data will inform a national report that will be published by Ithaka S+R in early 2018. The national report and all local reports will be published open access with links available on the Ithaka S+R website.

This report summarizes our local, Harvard-specific findings and is organized into five themes: Research Topics/Field of Asian Studies/Impact; Research Methods/Habits/Practices; Information Access; Data and Digital Scholarship; and Dissemination of Scholarship. Attached to the report is a series of related Appendices.

ASIAN STUDIES AT HARVARD

Asian studies faculty at Harvard are affiliated with all the schools and departments of Harvard University—the latter with preponderance in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, the Department of South Asian Studies, and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.
Scholars at Harvard University, founded in 1636, first exhibited a curricular interest in Asia in the late nineteenth century, offering courses in Sanskrit as early as 1872 and in Chinese by 1879. Before the mid-twentieth century, the field of Oriental languages at Harvard grew to encompass Japanese and Urdu, among other Asian languages. In addition to teaching, the faculty engaged in the philological and historical analysis of Asian literary texts.

South Asian and East Asian studies germinated from kindred seeds at Harvard. The former gained traction in 1903 with a Wales Chair in Sanskrit offered to Charles Rockwell Lanman, who presided over what was formerly known as the Department of Indo-Iranian Languages. Around that time, the department became known as the Department of Indic Philology, and over the years it changed names twice more, to the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies in 1951 and finally to the Department of South Asian Studies in 2010. Studies of Iranian language and civilization moved to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. At present, roughly a dozen undergraduates and more than 30 graduate students—15 at the doctoral level—are enrolled in South Asian studies. The department boasts eight named chairs and a total of 18 faculty members with appointments in fields including music, philosophy, anthropology, religion, and history, among others; it publishes the *Harvard Oriental Series*, an 80-plus-volume collection of text editions, translations, and studies of major texts in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. In 2018, Lakshmi Mittal and his family gave a gift of $25 million to Harvard’s South Asia Institute (SAI), an endowed research institute that now bears the name of this generous donor.

Developments in East Asian studies also began at the turn of the twentieth century, with Harvard’s first Chinese-language classes taught by Ge Kunhua, followed by the founding of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and its Chinese-Japanese Library, now called the Harvard-Yenching Library, nearly 50 years later, in 1928. Although the institute is independent, it has always played a central role in supporting East Asian scholarship at the university, as has the library, which became part of the Harvard Library system formally in 1976. Less than a decade after the founding of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Japanese entered the curriculum and the Department of Far Eastern Languages emerged as a distinct entity from the Department of Semitic Languages and History, offering a curriculum that grew to include Korean, Vietnamese, and other East Asian languages. In 1972, it changed names once more, to the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations (EALC). In addition to the Harvard-Yenching Institute, the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, and the Korea Institute have been playing critical roles in supporting East Asian studies, including generous funding for library acquisitions.

EALC currently enrolls 53 undergraduate concentrators and 81 graduate students and offers the Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations; East Asian Buddhism; History and East Asian Languages; and East Asian Arts, Film and Cultural Studies. Twenty-seven ladder-rank faculty, 13 of whom occupy named professorships or endowed chairs, compose the EALC faculty, focusing on religion, social history, cultural history, literature, comparative literature, and other specializations. Some major research projects sponsored by the department include the *China Biographical Database Project, East Asian Media Ecologies, The Poetry of Du Fu, and The Qingming Scroll*. The *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, published by the Harvard-Yenching Institute since 1936, is also an important contribution to the field.
METHODS

The research was conducted by librarians Michael Hopper, Ramona Islam, Richard Lesage, and Kuniko Yamada McVey, with Ramona Islam acting as the principal investigator for the project and Anu Vedantham serving as the faculty sponsor. The research project was approved by the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects, Harvard’s Institutional Review Board. All librarians completed the required ethics training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. Research team members Hopper, Islam, Lesage, and Yamada McVey completed Ithaka S+R ethnographic research training on March 27-28, 2017, at Suzzallo Library, University of Washington, Seattle.

The research team recruited a broad sample of the faculty who teach under the rubric of Asian studies at Harvard, described below, primarily from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. During the spring and summer of 2017, members conducted 16 semi-structured hour-long on-campus interviews with these individuals about their research practices and support needs. Participants agreed to be audio-recorded. The semi-structured interview protocol of 13 questions was designed by Ithaka S+R in consultation with an advisory committee and was used nationally at all participating institutions (see Appendix B).

Digital audio files of the faculty interviews were transcribed and analyzed in text form using standard qualitative data analysis methodologies. Transcripts were first coded by members of the research team. The codes were then grouped to facilitate the identification of key themes (see Appendix C), from which findings were derived. The study was voluntary. Faculty interviewees gave their informed consent (see Appendix A) and were free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the interview at any time for any reason. There were no known risks associated with participating in this study. There were also no direct benefits associated with participation in this study, although it was possible that faculty would experience increased insight and awareness into their own research practices and needs.

Faculty confidentiality was strictly maintained during the research study. The names of faculty interviewees are not linked to interview responses in either the local or national report. No faculty names were shared beyond the research team.

OUR SAMPLE

We interviewed 16 faculty members with a diverse range of subject expertise, methodological approaches and academic rank. Most of the participants are tenured faculty and some are junior faculty on a tenure track. It is very difficult to provide a simple list of the research areas for the participants, as most of them work across several areas of interest. A schematic breakdown of their main research foci, using the research areas identified on the websites of the interviewees, would look something like this:
PARTICIPANTS BY GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF STUDY

China  EastAsia  India  InnerAsia  Iran  
Japan  Korea  Nepal  SouthAsia  
SoutheastAsia  Taiwan  Thailand  Tibet

PARTICIPANTS BY TOPICS OF STUDY

Anthropology  Business  CulturalHistory  
Economics  EnvironmentalStudies  Film  History  
Literature  MediaStudies  Medicine  
Philology  PoliticalScience  Politics  
ReligiousStudies  SocialScience  SocialStudies

THEME ONE: SCHOLARS’ ORIENATIONS WITHIN AND PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIELD OF ASIAN STUDIES

Disciplinary Identities
Most of the scholars we interviewed identify themselves with the field of Asian studies, but only secondarily, because they tend to identify most strongly with their primary disciplines rather than with the setting of their research. Among those who identify as historians, most note that they are historians whose focus happens to be on Asia. In the words of one of them, “I am not really situated in the field of Asian studies in the sense that I am very much a historian who works on Asia.” Another said, “I am a
historian first and foremost.” The literary scholars we interviewed also identify themselves most readily with their literary focus, emphasizing how rooted they are in texts. Says one, “I am definitely a literature scholar”; this particular individual happens to study literatures beyond Asia as well, but the posture is not so different from that of scholars who focus on Asian literature alone. Another participant, whose research centers on economic and social phenomena, goes so far as to say, “It’s neither situated within Asian studies, nor does it aspire to be situated in Asian studies, but it’s informed by it.”

Nature of the Asian Studies Field
When reflecting on their role as scholars who study Asia, some participants emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of their work and the multidisciplinarity of Asian studies. A few of these individuals have several irons in the fire, combining expertise in multiple fields, such as anthropology and history, or art history and sociology, for example. Regarding this approach, a practitioner comments, “We’re not a disciplinary-based department, so it’s hard to put in a real category, which is nice to have the freedom to roam across different disciplines.” Generally, participants focus exclusively on one Asian country, take a broader regional focus within Asia, or enter the field from a discipline that is already highly interdisciplinary, such as religious studies. This is how some of them describe these orientations: “I’m a China scholar, basically”; or, “I’m interested in [historical] processes mostly in Japan, but as they connect to other parts of Asia in the early modern era”; or, “All of my research—not just this project, but everything else I’ve done—is, I guess, part of a newer tendency towards translational work”; or, “I think you could say that religious studies is inherently an interdisciplinary field . . . and I find that when the Association of Asian Studies needs someone to look at fellowship applications, say, across a wide span of areas, they have frequently asked me and other people in religious studies . . . because . . . we naturally take an interest in disciplines outside our own.”

Contrasting this perspective, a different scholar remarks, “There is no Asian studies. We operate under the illusion that we are an interdisciplinary field. The reality is we are a multidisciplinary field, right, that we all are in this umbrella of Asian studies, but we don’t actually communicate with one another.” That situation is bemoaned by a different respondent, who expresses frustration with a system perceived as slow to embrace interdisciplinary work: “The disciplinary boundaries are still too strong,” says this individual. Most academics “are interested only in their own discipline or subdiscipline . . . I put some applications [to do interdisciplinary projects] . . . but some of them were just shot down by the University . . . You’re just denied and then five years later they do the thing, not in my field. There is a certain delay here.”

Research Projects
As a whole, this study’s participants are engaged in a wide range of inquiries, both contemporary and historical, within the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, material culture, economics, history, political science, mathematics, literature, linguistics, social studies, medicine and health, and the study of religion. More specifically, their research topics center on media production, pop culture, human migration, organizational development, health care, aging, environmental studies, social and economic history, mythology, poetry, and religious practices in ancient and modern times. Some of the scholars we interviewed focus their research on examining relationships between two or more of the topics noted earlier, such as between religion and nationalism or technology and aging, while others undertake comparative studies across geographic subregions, for example, looking at politics in both China and India. Despite the vast range of topics, in common to all is the locus of research in Asia, whether in South, Southeast, East, or Inner Asia.
Many pursue well-established lines of research, while others focus on emerging areas. In regard to the latter, a respondent notes that media studies has begun to encompass film studies, more broadly. Another participant offers, “East Asia is quickly becoming one region where people are trying out different ideas, new ways of employing something like media studies approaches, in slightly different ways maybe even than in the U.S. context. So, it’s a kind of field formation that’s happening right now, and everyone is still trying to figure out what that actually means and what the possibilities of that are.”

A literary and religious studies scholar mentions that there has been, as yet, insufficient interest among South Asian scholars in creating scholarly editions of ancient and medieval texts in order to develop a clear genealogy of manuscripts—a fertile area for research that could improve scholarship in the field. According to another, a neglected concern regarded amplifying the voices of scholars in Asia: “We may have today one of the great philosophers of the world writing in Telugu, okay? . . . What about if we create some sort of vehicle where outstanding young scholars in South Asia and Southeast Asia, who have minimal access to English, could have their ideas translated and projected more effectively?” These comments reflect the changing landscape of Asian studies. While traditional scholarship used to focus mainly on ancient Asian civilizations, scholars have begun to pursue more diverse topics, including contemporary issues like the environment, urban development, and Asia’s growing economic presence.

Research Trends
Several participants offer some interesting observations about their field and recommendations for its evolution. For example, one scholar suggests, “Having a more global perspective on something like East Asian studies and a more area studies–type approach in other supposedly non–area studies disciplines [such as gender studies or film studies] is a development that should take place. I think we can see some attempts at that already.” Meanwhile, another scholar says, “One of the exciting things about the field of Asian studies in general is that more and more scholars are working beyond all national boundaries.” This sentiment is echoed by a peer who expresses a desire “to try to work beyond some of the old area studies boundaries that still structure our institutions.” Yet another respondent advocates embracing wide regional connections despite pressures to specialize. Some encourage their students to adopt such an approach. Says one, “My students all have multiple languages. Even if they end up writing their dissertations about Japan only, they’ve spent time elsewhere, at least in East Asia. They’ve thought about these issues in a context that’s other than just Japan, or other than just Japan as compared to the Western world . . . [They are] trying to think more globally than in the past.”

Why is this broader orientation so important? One participant explains that challenges in today’s globalized world, like public health, aging, and moral experience, resonate beyond national and regional borders. Likewise, another mentions the importance of issues like economics, which “cross-cuts societies” in Asia. There remain difficulties with achieving an expanded vision, however. As one professor notes, “Many of the younger scholars are under so much disciplinary pressure to address problems in their particular discipline, but sometimes they lose sight of the really important problems in the country that they’re actually studying. I think also, because we are all specialized, that it’s often difficult to see connections among and comparisons among Asian countries.”

Relevance to the Academy
These scholars overwhelmingly see Asia as worthy of greater emphasis in the United States academy for two main reasons: developments in Asian societies and the increasing geopolitical importance of Asia on the world stage. According to one respondent, certain changes in Asian societies have made the region internationally relevant:
One is the building of a middle class, and that middle class is a very different group of people than were in those societies before: much more secular, much more concerned with standards and quality, making greater demands on governments, and very much centered on how to somehow relate traditional moral issues to contemporary moral problems. The second big thing that I think Asian societies have gone through is revitalization of religion, but in different ways . . . [prompting individuals to ask] what is the relationship of a nation like India, which is supposed to be a secular state, to its religious traditions, and what about the place of minorities? And things of that nature.

Another facet of the changes underfoot in Asia, the increasing relevance of global warming to the region, particularly concerns another participant, who states, “There are the critiques of the kinds of knowledge that an area of study tends to produce and its relevance to some of the problems that the world faces—for example, climate change.” Other interviewees note Asia’s growing prominence internationally—in one individual’s words, “Sixty-five percent of the world’s population lives in Asia. The most powerful countries of the future are in Asia.” Another scholar underscores that assessment, saying, “Now, for example, department of political science really value their . . . [Asian] . . . politics faculty in a way that they didn’t in the past.” These kinds of observations are shared by many, and the following quotation, from another respondent, sums it up very clearly: “A big opportunity that comes from Asia is increasing centrality in the world, and the opportunity is that there is likely to be more student interest in studying Asia, for example, and that the kinds of problems that contemporary Asia confronts are pressing but also intellectually interesting.”

Harvard Context
Even while Asia looms large, some perceive that Harvard is failing to dedicate sufficient attention and resources to its study. Specifically in regard to South Asia, one scholar says, “That part of the world . . . is home to two billion people out of seven billion in the world . . . As a university that aspires to be thought of as a global university, we shouldn’t be ignoring it, but we are.” This same respondent calls for recruiting more South Asian studies scholars in order to achieve a level comparable to that in East Asian studies, and cited Harvard’s Lakshmi Mittal South Asia Institute as evidence of small, but important, progress on a long road ahead. Southeast Asia also stood out for mention; says one participant, “I was very concerned of building Southeast Asia at Harvard. The reason for that is this is an incredibly important part of the world. It’s one of the parts of the world where we have, at various times, had some strength, but never really a critical mass.” Another respondent is similarly critical: “We do a lousy job at Harvard on Asia, in my view, in terms of making knowledge of Asia broadly available. This university is still dominated by a Eurocentric sense of the world that is not in keeping with where the world is today.” Regarding these comments, it is evident that the Asian studies landscape at Harvard is not even. By contrast, East Asian studies has been relatively well supported since 1928, when the Yenching Institute was established.

Theme Two: Research Methods/Habits/Practice

Research Methods Employed
Our scholars’ research methods largely reflect their discipline and topics. Reading and analyzing text is central for most humanists, such as historians and literary scholars, while empirical work is essential for social scientists, such as sociologists and anthropologists. Meanwhile, the use of computer models is a relatively new method that is typically employed by multidisciplinary teams studying contemporary issues in Asian studies.
For most scholars we interviewed, textual analysis is the predominant research method. They read both archival documents and printed books and journals. As one historian attests, “The fundamental method that I have is archival research, looking at documents and other sorts of text from the time that I’m looking at. I think among historians, the way that I go about my work is not anything particularly special.” A literary scholar describes the research process as follows: “I . . . will read a lot around and quite far at times from the topic that I want to concentrate on. That first phase of exploration will require a lot of looking around and picking books and then I’ll stop and center on the text that I want to study, having hopefully all my notes as much as possible on the other secondary material and then write from there.”

For most scholars on Asia, traveling to the locales they are studying is essential. For example, visiting local archives still requires traveling, as does field research. Some scholars take a hybrid approach, such as one historian who collects written materials and observes local rituals, spending long stretches of time in communities in the Chinese countryside. For this researcher, sources of textual materials, such as stone inscriptions in local temples, private papers stowed in bedrooms, and documents kept in local archives, are wide and varied. Making friends, as simple as it may sound, is an integral ingredient for some, because it elicits opportunities to learn about local rituals and events. As one respondent describes it, “I also go to villages and basically make friends with people and ask to see their genealogy.”

Most social scientists working on Asia, such as anthropologists and sociologists, report conducting fieldwork on site, which entails observation, listening, and interviewing and often involves some degree of serendipity. “We don't go in with a plan to which we absolutely have to come up with an answer,” says one scholar. “We don't go in with a hypothesis that we test.” This scholar attributes meaningful value to the length of time spent in the field and the depth of intimacy established with research participants. Another scholar, who becomes “immersed in the phenomenon” under study, says, “[I] literally spend time being very close to whatever it is that I want to study, then observe for a while and ask questions and engage with people who are deeply immersed in the issue, and then retreat to my office and think about it, analyze the data.”

Another scholar uses “computer models and data analyses and things of that nature to study phenomena that I’m interested in.” According to this respondent, research projects involve “primarily empirical work, and I collect all sorts of data, quantitative, qualitative data, survey data—recently, even oral histories of different sorts to try to understand a particular aspect of what’s happening in whatever the theater is, the empirical theater as well as the concept that I’m studying in question.” Many of this individual’s research projects are collaborative and involve working with students, economists, sociologists, political scientists, mathematicians, statisticians, and other experts; analysis is undertaken through relevant disciplinary lenses.

Collaboration
Although most of the humanists in the group prefer to work independently, many of those whom we interviewed are actively collaborating to produce scholarship. Some of those who collaborate do so in partnerships, such as the case of an archaeologist working with a geneticist, while others seek a wide range of collaborators, whether colleagues, research assistants, or students. Collaborative projects include writing books and engaging in field research, and may involve organizing teams of experts across the globe. The nature and scale of collaborations vary. Some large-scale international collaboration involves data analysts and computer programming specialists managing and analyzing vast amounts of
complex data, or medical scientists and urban planners working together on an urgent problem. Naturally, many of these collaborative projects are interdisciplinary, and most are made possible by new technologies.

One of the literary scholars we interviewed works with peers who are in the same discipline but who are based outside the United States and offer complementary linguistic expertise. Others are members of international project teams comprising scholars from different disciplines. A case in point is an anthropologist who assembled a group of specialists from Harvard’s disciplinary schools including engineering, design, business, medicine, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to work with a major technology institute in Asia on the development of social systems and technological interventions for the elderly. This researcher also collaborates with scholars across East and Southeast Asia to analyze and compare models for elder care in order to identify best practices for building culturally and socially appropriate systems tailored to the needs of local communities. Trained in two disciplines, this scholar is mindful that collaboration to these ends is relatively rare, yet continues, “But I think it’s changing . . . I think the world we’re in is forcing more collaboration.” This individual wants to “make sure that local voices in Asian societies are part of the research.” Only a handful of scholars in this study reported engaging with multidisciplinary teams to deal with contemporary issues in Asian countries. Other collaborations of note involve humanists in Asian studies working closely with data science and visualization specialists.

**Keeping up with Trends**

Interviewees shared a variety of tools and methods they use to keep up with trends in their field. While attending conferences is cited by several as a good way to stay informed, one scholar touts organizing conferences as particularly helpful. Other tools and methods include scholarly listservs, podcasts, Google Alerts, talking with colleagues and graduate students, reading current journals, and following social media. Some report that peer reviewing for an academic journal is a good way to read the latest scholarship.

Difficulties keeping up with trends are acknowledged, and these difficulties are attributed to the vast amount of new research. In their own words, participants describe the situation: “Recent proliferation of Chinese scholarship, some of it good, presents challenges with keeping up,” or, “Now even in English, the field of Japanese history has grown so big. It’s not huge by any means but it’s big enough that it’s a challenge just to keep up with all of the new English-language scholarship on Japan in general . . . it always feels like I’m running, trying to catch up.” Another says, “[Decades ago], I read everything in the field. If I read every minute of every day, I could not keep up with my subfield right now, let alone the whole field.” This latter respondent poses a critical question: “So I think that’s an issue in expertise. What does expertise mean in our time?” Another scholar echoes this sentiment, saying, “There’s no way I can have the same kind of ‘universal ideal observer’ kind of view of what’s going on in the field. No way. It’s impossible now.”

**Challenges**

These scholars voice a concern that scholarly standardized texts on South Asia and Inner Asia are not available, and existing texts are not reliable. Likewise, a scholar of West Asian literature reports that scholarly materials are not centrally collected. This is in contrast to East Asian historical texts that are extensively transcribed with many scholarly editions readily available in the library stacks or online.
One common challenge among scholars who use local archives in Asia is accessing the materials. Cultural and traditional differences play a major role in that experience, but the greatest challenge reported is that local and central archives have recently tightened access privileges even compared to ten years ago, and diplomatic and political documents are virtually inaccessible in China. This is a reminder that Asia as a region has its own political and other sensitive issues that actually and potentially pose ongoing critical challenges to scholarship.

**Theme Three: Information Access**

**Primary Sources**

Scholars surveyed rely on various kinds of primary information depending on their area of specialization or their method of research. Traditional historians, focusing on the written record, conduct research at government archives and local historical societies in various Asian countries, as well as colonial archives in Europe: “Archival research remains the core of what I do, which in my case is a balance between the archives in London, which are the archives of the colonial state and which are very well preserved and cataloged, . . . and then extensive research in India and other parts of Southeast Asia in both national-level archives but also regional-level archives.” Literary historians and philologists are in constant search of new texts in manuscript or established texts published in edited volumes. The latter are either held by their institutional library or are increasingly being made accessible in online databases: “I try to trace ideas and texts as they were submitted from the inner Subcontinent via translation . . . I am mainly a text person.” In addition to textual sources, some historians using new investigative methods rely on ethnographic-style fieldwork, including oral interviews and observations of local customs: “So we do a lot of work in the countryside, collecting materials in the same way as anthropologists do ethnography in the field . . . I watch rituals. I videotape rituals and I try to figure out the history behind those rituals.” Scholars studying popular audiovisual culture rely mostly on websites and social media. They also need to approach private collectors to study materials and artifacts, which have not traditionally been within the collecting scope of academic libraries. Anthropologists rely primarily on the data they have gathered but also on other published sources to explore the historical and political background of their subjects and societies. One such respondent uses “a lot of media sources,” especially newspapers, both print and online, as well as political pamphlets. Some of the social scientists rely on big data:

> I collect all sorts of data, quantitative, qualitative data, survey data—recently, even oral histories of different sorts to try to understand a particular aspect of what’s happening in whatever the theater is, the empirical theater as well as the concept that I’m studying . . . With data speeds accelerating and data storage becoming so much more feasible, there’s really no reason why we only have to rely on the printed word as reliable information.

**Challenges**

Researchers experience challenges in accessing information at some government archives due to apparently arbitrary restrictive policies put in place by the state: “The greatest challenges for me are access to Chinese government archives . . . They are not uniformly open . . . Sometimes you see materials that are open and then the next time you go to the same archive they tell you that those materials don’t exist . . . and although there is a 30-year open rule, open-access rule, in fact it’s not really honored.” The scholars overwhelmingly praise the role of archivists in the field, as well as Harvard librarians, in helping them access records that may give clues or answers to their research questions:
I’m very, very grateful when the Harvard-Yenching Library or other libraries in America are able to acquire Chinese archival materials. That’s extremely beneficial. So, for example, when the U.S. National Archives acquired the Shanghai Police materials, which then were put on microfilm and became available at a number of different universities, that was extremely valuable.

Respondents note that archives are increasingly being digitized in China and Japan, thus improving access to primary sources. In some other instances, researchers access primary sources through printed materials held by the library:

Korean scholars have done a lot of work in terms of republishing, reprinting primary sources originally housed in archives. So, you know, I usually look into a particular set of reprinted materials. One of them, as you can see, is here. It’s a collection of local archives. I just go through them by what type of documents, by the year of publication or compilation. So, you know, fortunately we have a lot of them in our library, so I don’t have to go to Korea a lot to gather materials.

Respondents also lament the poor cataloging, or absence thereof, of archival materials in some Asian institutions. Even when archives are well cataloged for administrative control, researchers must resort to idiosyncratic search strategies to find what they are looking for: “[I try] to figure out clever ways to look within archive collections that sometimes [are] well cataloged, but not cataloged with the kinds of things I’m doing in mind. So trying to outsmart the card catalog sometimes is the first challenge.” They wish that in addition to traditional archival description and finding aids, more ample metadata would allow for granular searches by a variety of keywords.

Secondary Sources
Secondary sources are important to researchers so that they can keep up with trends in their field—although one respondent pointed out that this is now an impossible task due to the deluge of information available: “I cannot keep up with my field, and about 50 percent of what’s in my field I’ve never read.” Faculty get to know about secondary resources in a variety of ways: through conferences, conversation with their students, personal connections with scholars in Asia, listservs in their discipline, books received for review, searching the Internet, and the library’s online catalog, which they find to be a powerful tool.

[I locate secondary sources] by reading contemporary journals and tracing the footnotes in those journals. I spend a lot of time looking through [Harvard’s] HOLLIS [catalog] and finding materials that both relate to the China side of my topic and to the non-China side of it. I really do a lot of catalog searching online, and also use Google, Google Scholar, and LexisNexis and so forth, to try to find . . . I spend a lot of time with CNKI [China National Knowledge Infrastructure, a national full-text journals database] and China academic journals, databases, through Harvard-Yenching, doing keyword searches . . . to locate those materials. I also attend a lot of conferences and so learn from other scholars’ papers and their presentations what are secondary sources that they have found particularly influential and then follow up on those when I get back home.

Challenges
The sheer size of Harvard’s collections can be challenging to faculty: “One of the big challenges for both secondary and primary sources is discovering all the things that are there.” In this context relevant information retrieval cannot come from the catalog’s discovery capabilities alone, but rather by
determining appropriate search strategies: “A big challenge was thinking about all the different kinds of keywords and approaches, some of which were geographic and some of which were thematic, that I really needed to be able to master.” They hope that these challenges can be addressed by better use of controlled vocabulary, which would allow “universal keyword searches” across the entire holdings of the Harvard Library, in whatever language and format. Another important functionality the catalog should provide is browsing by classification for items held without call numbers in restricted-access off-site storage: “What worries me about the current situation at the library and the huge number of books that it has is, of course, that more and more stuff is going into the depository. We’ve got to recover the capacity for browsing at some point. I know that there are electronic ways to do that and that people are beginning to think about how that might happen.”

Other respondents involved with Chinese studies point to the difficulties they experience using Chinese transliterations in their searches. This is due to the profusion of homonyms and the presence (or absence) of spaces in compound terms. Consequently, a search has to be repeated using different keywords, combined and not combined. Most faculty express the wish for “better indexing of materials” and a granular analysis of contents in the library’s catalog. As a remedy, they hope for more digitization and the advent of optical character recognition (OCR) for a wide range of writing systems: “We’re looking forward to more texts being available for complete research and search online.” One individual comments, “Of course, over time, as more and more things are digitized, presumably it will be easier to do more and more universal searches . . . but I think the library is working very hard on that.” Another interviewee deems the enhancement of library catalog records with a table of contents note to be “very valuable,” and also laments the fact that older monographic series among the library’s collections are still not cataloged at the individual item level. Users need to take circuitous approaches to find these materials. Yet another scholar wishes that more book chapters were listed in catalog records. This is especially needed for ethnographic studies that, due to their length, are usually published as chapters in edited volumes rather than in journals: “There was period of time where [Harvard’s] Tozzer Library was the only anthropology library in the world that abstracted all chapters in all books, and that’s no more. So my own feeling is that this has contributed to the problem.”

Many respondents express their appreciation of librarians’ assistance in locating primary and secondary sources. One says, “You have often alerted me to things that I’ve not seen . . . In that sense, now we get much better cooperation [from the librarians] and data.” Another explains, “I lean heavily on [the librarian] for assistance not only in securing sources, but strategizing about where to look for sources.”

A major challenge encountered is determining the quality of the information retrieved in a search of the library’s catalog. A faculty member wishes for a mechanism in the catalog to filter out monographs and articles that are of little value to scholarship:

I think this is just a huge problem: how to assess the materials that are out there, not just in terms of the quality of the research and the truth-value of the findings, but simply in terms of reading everything . . . This is the library perspective of the future . . . I would bring it to filters, which are what are the scholarly and academic filters that can be put on things that would constrain the vast plethora of research papers to those most central to your work, most valid.

Another challenge presented to a social scientist relying on empirical analyses of data is that secondary sources from Asia “are harder to find and . . . you have to make sure that the processes by which those data are collected are at least as rigorous as those that our system here goes through to make it palatable to the academics and usable by the academics.”
Some respondents allude to copyright laws as being an impediment to accessing both primary and secondary materials: “North Korea is very difficult in terms of clearing copyrights.” Japan also has stringent copyright laws, without the fair-use exception. Here, too, respondents are thankful that librarians help them overcome these obstacles.

**Strength of the Collections**
By and large, respondents highlight the strength of the Harvard Library’s print collections and electronic resources particularly for classical texts and historical sources relating to East Asia and the Islamic heritage of West and South Asia. Says one scholar, “I must say here, at [Harvard’s] Widener [Library] in particular I was able to discover recent publications that I could not find a trace of in . . . [the source country’s] . . . websites.” This kind of observation among respondents also holds for Asian classical texts: “[I have access] to about 12 million pages of . . . text, so there’s plenty in there to work with.” Another observes, “I feel lucky to have very good [classical] collections going back to the 19th century, very rare things you don’t find.” The faculty considers that collections are crucial for research. A specialist of Japan states, “The university is providing me a really magnificent set of resources . . . [The library] needs to go forward with this level of resource. It’s truly remarkable, and without it I couldn’t function . . . You cannot maintain a continuous process of research unless you’ve got the stuff coming in.” Against the backdrop of recently established area studies programs, Southeast Asia is indicated as an area of weakness in terms of research and consequently collection building. In this regard, a respondent notes, “This is an incredibly important part of the world . . . where we have, at various times, had some strength, but never really a critical mass.” Says another, “If you’re reading a historical background, it will often take you to secondary sources . . . in Thai, which are not easy to find here [in North America]. For Thailand, [the library] doesn’t really have that much, and that’s something, of course, that [faculty and library] are working on trying to improve.”

**Technology**
Respondents complain about insufficient technological infrastructure in the classroom, especially for audiovisual materials:

I’ve several times expressed my sense that our systems are inadequate for any courses that use visual materials in any quantity . . . Visual materials are extremely important . . . If I want to make students aware of the [aesthetic element], teach them how to learn about it and research it themselves, I need better access than I have . . . I feel that the university is constantly on the back foot when it comes to these issues of technology and incorporating them into the classroom. I almost want to ask sarcastically if the university believes that MIT has problems like this, just down the street. I think the answer is no.

Another respondent involved in textual criticism echoes this complaint. This scholar is looking for better tools to deal with data collected and describes Harvard as an “immovable institution” when it comes to technological infrastructure, saying that the university fails to provide sophisticated analytical tools such as those that “can actually create family trees of manuscripts . . . using the programs used in biological, genetic, and biological studies, transferring them to our field . . . [or] looking up two words at the same time in a particular text.”
Theme Four: Data and Digital Scholarship

Collecting Existing Data

The basic approach of most of the scholars is to use a combination of methods to gather, generate, organize, analyze, store, and preserve data. In collecting data the scholars use a wide variety of methods and means including notes on scraps of paper, cutouts of newspaper articles, photographs, photocopies, video and sound recordings, oral interviews, social media and networks, personal contacts developed over years, transliteration of existing texts, text recitation, examination of manuscripts, oral histories, mining archival sources both in print and online, locating specific objects such as statues or war memorials, ephemeral communication channels such as SMS, and downloading existing datasets. Data collection can range from such diverse sources as oral histories in the institutional library to social conversations in the researched country to manipulation of existing government datasets to the cataloging of cultural landmarks in Japan and the United States.

One respondent pointed to the difficulty of obtaining big commercial datasets, even when anonymized, adding that personal connections, sometimes with alumni, are of primary importance to being able to access this kind of data. This echoes the sentiment of other scholars who note some difficulties in obtaining data from official institutions in specific countries.

Generating New Data

Just as there is a plethora of ways of gathering data, so do scholars generate different types of data for their research. This largely flows out of the nature of the research itself and what is expedient to the scholars’ needs. This may be as simple as data points recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, the creation of a database complete with text and images with associated cataloging, or the creation of complex computer models and data analyses to extrapolate data from raw material.

Once this data is in place it can be mined to generate new data. A researcher observes, “The rich data in my . . . [artefacts] . . . database may be searched and recombined to ask new questions. It has already been helpful to answer a question about religious practice in modern China.” Another observes, “Lately, though, I’ve found that most of my research projects, I generate my own data, which is I create it by either direct observation or direct measurement or direct inducement with the entity that we’re studying. So I’m relying, personally, less and less on the secondary data to do much of my current research.” A scholar who is part of a collaborative project on Asian oral history makes these trenchant comments regarding the creation of new data:

The very raw data are just people speaking into recording devices around the world. But in principle, we could do these with thousands of people and you could simply, in my imagination, you could simply speak into your phone anywhere, follow some protocols, and upload your data into the cloud. Our algorithms would then parse your speech and the patterns and your emotion, your memories, and do all sort of semantic analyses, and essentially look at your lived experience the way you remember it in a way that has already been shown to be quite different from [what is] recorded in the written text by historians and political scientists. It’s a very different data exercise.
This individual expounds: “So what we’ve been able to do with our interviews is reconstruct migration paths that people took and figure out where they camped out, where their refugee camps were, what they did in these places, what their experience was. That has enormous implications today for all sorts of forced migration that’s going on from the Middle East to Europe and the camps and so on.”

Interestingly, two scholars specifically state that their research does not elicit data and one disclaims any interest in being a “digital humanities practitioner.” However, when probed, the first of these respondents notes that data gathering consists of “asking questions and finding answers,” adding, “The things that I discover in the archives or other research becomes the database that informs what I write. . . . In that sense, yes, I do produce data.” Meanwhile the other scholar, whose work is primarily textual, is interested in data in the sense of collecting “occurrences” but categorizes this aspect of research as minor. However, this same individual elaborates:

[Textual analysis] is actually one of the fields that seems to be developing right now, and that is OCR projects on . . . [scripts in my research area] . . . usually. This is very promising. This is something that we do, that I look forward to using a lot more. I know a variety of people working to develop this. It is still, I would think, in its infancy, at least for the type of use that we literature people have of it, and therefore we’re looking forward to more texts being available for complete research and search online.

**Organizing and Storing Original or Collected Data, Information, or Other Resources**

When asked how they store primary and secondary data gathered in the course of their research, the faculty members whom we interviewed, except one, state that they store the information they collect through their own means: on their personal computers in various file types, CDs, internal and external hard drives, or in the cloud using systems such as Dropbox, OneDrive, or Google Docs. Word documents, Excel documents, and PDFs are the chief formats used for texts. Respondents have their own systems for arranging the materials and do not mention the use of citation tools. For research materials and data gathered prior to the personal computer age, respondents keep a paper copy filed in thematic folders. One researcher is not concerned about the need of organizing and storing secondary source materials, because that individual is assured of ongoing access to library collections due to tenure. Another respondent states that recent datasets produced or gathered are so large that they are stored and backed up on the institution’s server. As for original data collected 20 years ago, this scholar, who does not know how to retrieve the data, surmises that it might be lost at this point or inaccessible. These methods are tailored by both the nature of the research and the particular scholar’s awareness of and ability to use the data management systems presently available.

Some lament the fact that but for lack of time, they would like to be more knowledgeable of the options available to them and have the opportunity to learn new systems: “Teach me digital humanities. So to teach me text mining, to teach me GIS, and to teach me database construction analysis. I can see there’s so much interesting work that I would love to be able to do and I just, at this point in my career, do not have the time to invest in learning that.” A second adds: “I don’t have a big training in making a database and all that kind of stuff, so that’s been the hardest thing for me is how to work with those and then think about how to preserve data for long periods and also get all of these—build a kind of database that then can be put on a website and do all of that.”

**Sharing Data**

Those scholars interested in data sharing face considerable obstacles. This can range from simple things, like difficulty posting a link to one’s database, to larger challenges posed by an aging infrastructure
underpinning a given database. One researcher notes, “My . . . database [is] currently on a server in Europe on a ten-year-old idiosyncratic software platform from . . . [East Asia]. Takes time and money to update.” Another expresses frustration in making their data available: “One of the big questions as a methodological challenge is what to do with that archive, because the archive is mostly there, right, or it’s in file folders, or it’s on my computer in images. So it’s data, but it’s not obvious to me how to share that data, right?” That individual continues:

Because of the book being finished, I’ve just been completing footnotes, and it’s an incredibly frustrating exercise. This is true of every project, I think. Had I only known what the data was going to look like beforehand, I would’ve organized it completely differently, but unfortunately, that’s not how it works. You only know the data as you proceed through the project. I actually had a grant . . . to produce a database of local . . . historical data, and it was really not a success, because any way of managing the data at point of entry was too time-consuming. I wasn’t willing to sacrifice time in the field to making the database look correct to begin with. So the result is that the data is just everywhere . . . If I had the time to have a serious metadata conceptualization I’d be much better off.

Preserving Data

Preservation of data in any format remains a paramount concern for many of the scholars. Most express a desire to make sure that no data in any format is lost or inaccessible. Will the scholar be able to access older computer files of whatever format and stored wherever? Is this data in danger of being lost? In commenting on the vast amount of knowledge out there and future possibilities for data creation, a scholar observes, “Thinking about how the expansion of the archive to infinity shapes what we do as scholars—that does strike me as something we should be thinking about.”

All of this comes with a caution that the importance of print and analog data should not be disregarded or minimized in the pursuit of electronic data. A practitioner comfortable in both the pre-digital and digital worlds cautions: “Digitizing work in recent years has been important, but on the other hand, I don’t want to give the impression that I think this pre-digitized material is gone. It’s there. It’s just trying to figure out how it can be accessed.” Interestingly enough, this professor further notes that it is difficult sometimes to elicit interest in pre-digital files and documents when compared with the relatively easy accessibility of online digital files: “Maybe a historian would go into [my] archives, see the dozens of boxes for some of these studies and get excited by doing it. But most people would be, I think, overwhelmed and say, ‘Oh, I can’t take this on.’”

Another problem scholars have to grapple with is the privacy and confidentiality issues stemming from the nature of the data collected:

A lot of the data I have is highly confidential interviews on subjects that you need confidentiality for. So for example . . . I have interviews that are related in a broad way to the consequences of poor governance and dangerous politics. You can’t just make that available because it would place the subjects in a potentially dangerous situation. So, that data, I’ve either encrypted in such a way that no one else can have access to it or, if it was literally material that we have printed out, so for example transcripts of interviews, I’ve got them locked in a special place away from Harvard . . . The question is how do you give access to this? . . . I’ve never worked out effectively in my own mind how to both protect the anonymity of the subject and to get some of this material out. So I’m sitting on a lot of material in that regard . . . From the standpoint of
knowledge production, some of it is important knowledge, but what do you do with it? I’ve never really figured that one out.

**Theme Five: Dissemination of Scholarship**

**Primary Audiences**
Most but not all of this study’s participants already have tenure, and these individuals have the freedom to publish their scholarship in a range of venues according to factors like the geographic location and native language of their desired readership. Some indicate that their intended audience isn’t necessarily in the United States. Says one scholar,

> These days when I’m writing things, most of it I’m still writing for an American scholarly audience, but . . . increasingly I find that the work I’m doing . . . nobody at Harvard really cares about it, even though I think it’s relevant to Harvard. But a number of people in academic circles in China seem to find it quite interesting, and so more and more, I do think about how what I have to say might be received by a Chinese audience.

Another individual shares a similar observation: “My defenses are probably more highly reported in Japan than they are in the U.S.” This scholar writes many works in Japanese rather than English. Catering to multiple audiences sometimes entails significant extra work. For example, some translate their English-language scholarship into Asian languages for a contemporary readership abroad. Such efforts mirror the value respondents assign to cultivating a relevant readership. “I think it’s important to publish in those languages where one is a player,” says a participant who writes in both Asian and European languages. It is noted that Western researchers without expertise in Asian languages have scant access to scholarship produced in Asian languages; by contrast, Asian researchers without expertise in English have ample access to translations of scholarship produced in English. “If I were to . . . translate a paper from Tibetan or Chinese by a contemporary scholar,” says one participant, “and submit it to, say, the NARN journal or the *Journal Asiatique*, they’ll laugh at me and say, ‘Why bother with this?’ It’s just not done.” Meanwhile, the same scholar points to the existence of a whole series in China “devoted to just translations of articles written by foreign scholars either in French or German or English or Japanese.”

Scholars on the tenure track tend to focus more specifically on a Western academic audience and they publish with promotion and tenure requirements in mind. Within the academic sphere, most respondents, whether or not they have tenure, address a cross-disciplinary audience. One scholar simultaneously caters to historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists. Having a diverse audience is sometimes a product of interdisciplinary collaboration, as in the cases of two respondents, the first of whom explains, “I have been working quite a bit with linguists and history of linguistics people. These tend to have specific audiences that are not the same as literature.” Similarly, the second says, “The books we have published . . . have a broader audience because archaeologists are involved, linguists are involved. It is not always narrow, South Asian textual studies.”

**Academic Publication Genres**
The most popular academic publication formats are monographs and peer-reviewed journals. Speaking of the former, a scholar says, “I would say that as a field we are mostly a book field. This is also where my interest lies more than articles . . . Writing a book is more about trying to tell these stories and bring these ideas and these arguments to a wider educated readership and not just specialists in my field.” University presses predominate as the chosen publishers of scholarly monographs. Regarding journal
articles, the same scholar says, “Journal articles are where I would put the more technical stuff, for want of a better word.” Another says, “I will try to get at least one or two articles, peer-reviewed articles, in any given year. This year, I’ve already got one in and the second one accepted and actually a third one in preparation.” This individual prefers to publish in a large number of disciplinary journals and has never published more than once in the same journal. A range of criteria influences which journals participants target. For theoretical research, they tend to choose disciplinary journals, but for writings focused on a given locale, they more often select country-specific journals. One scholar makes an effort to publish in a Harvard-based journal relevant to the field, and another, whose scholarship cuts across disciplines, has research published not only in anthropological journals, but also in scientific journals, like *Nature*. In an increasingly digital era, some venture into online journals, but this trend is more common among those with tenure: “When I was on a sort of so-called tenure track, I didn’t think that online journal is a desirable venue to publish my work. From now on, I don’t mind going with online open-access journals.”

After full-length books and journals, the other academic genres Asian studies faculty publish include edited volumes and book chapters, edited anthologies, conference volumes, textbooks, working papers, *Festschriften*, and book reviews. They also speak at conferences and disseminate their research to students through teaching. Regarding the latter, one professor expresses an interest in distributing course slides beyond Harvard, given the proper legal guidance. This individual states, “I would like to preserve and disseminate the PowerPoint lectures that I use for my class . . . At some point I would like to make it available to the broader field . . . and to our main professional organization . . . [which] has a project for sharing syllabi and so on.” In the classroom, a different professor plays first-hand video files collected in the field and comments that working with students often clarifies understanding of the research: “Those have proven to be very interesting because we’re now breaking those videos up into bits and pieces and we use them for teaching purposes, and we use them for research purposes. They’ve become sort of another data source.”

**Academic Publishing Crisis**

Some interviewees bring forward misgivings about the state of scholarly publishing. An individual who thinks that traditional publishing models are on the way out due to years-long time lags says, “I think the publishing system is seriously broken and doesn’t work for furthering dissemination of research and encouraging conversations about that research.” The state of the publishing system also worries another scholar, who is especially concerned that the next generation of scholars will not find viable vehicles to support their scholarly production. This individual does not mince words: “From the point of view of dissemination, academic publishing is in a crisis. And to the extent that books, monographic studies remain important, it’s a problem because they don’t sell as much as they used to, or they don’t bring as much revenue in. The libraries, including university libraries, aren’t buying as many.” Book publishing is cited as problematic because of insufficient indexing, and for journals, the peer review process also causes concern. One scholar says, “I’m not sure how many of my colleagues continue to subject themselves to the peer review process. I also know that the younger generation is increasingly reluctant to review for journals.” Meanwhile, the proliferation of academic journals is noted as having a negative impact. States a different scholar, “At this stage of my life I’m very concerned about the proliferation of journals and writing for one’s own discipline only. I think in my field . . . where at the beginning we had three journals, now we have dozens and dozens of journals. It leads to young people publishing for others but not for a broader audience, and therefore it loculates. It limits what people read.”

One participant, who is putting up with the status quo in order to qualify for tenure, expresses a desire to disseminate scholarly work instead via blogs and social media, e-journals, and multimedia.
**Dissemination to Lay Audiences**

Academia is a very important audience for these researchers’ work, but not the only one. Several scholars serve as public intellectuals on some level, either addressing the general public in the U.S. and abroad, or talking with community members from among their research populations to benefit cultural heritage initiatives. Forums for this kind of work include talks, exhibitions, ephemera, media appearances on television and radio, newspaper articles, popular-press books, and social media posts.

“I’ve just finished a project that’s taken me about ten years to do, which is a book I’ve written,” says one scholar who has published several popular books and speaks highly of senior popular-press editors, who, according to this individual, “can take your material and turn it into something that’s readable.” This respondent continues: “[They] tear your material apart. I really feel that that’s one of the basic things missing in academia today.” Yet, when considering the role of commercial presses, another respondent does not see them as a viable alternative. “I avoid the commercial press,” says that individual. “One reason is reputation but also because of price of the book. It’s too expensive and no one’s going to buy it. That is limiting the dissemination of my work.” A few respondents reach the public through talks. “I get invited to give lectures,” says one of them, “at places like the Museum of Fine Arts or other, usually museums, where I reach an interested lay audience. But that’s me speaking and showing pictures, rather than folks reading what I bring.” One individual has written an introduction for the program of a famous theater company and has served as a guest lecturer at area high schools. Another participant is planning an exhibition. Says that scholar, “I am planning an art exhibit here in connection with the enthronement rites, which will, I hope, be open to the general public.” A humble attitude about such contributions tends to be the norm. Not everyone in the sample engages the public, however. For example, one scholar frequently turns down invitations to be interviewed in the media or to write columns about contemporary politics and social issues in a particular Asian country, despite having expertise in its history. Says this individual, “I think that’s more the job of sociologists or political scientists . . . I don’t want to be a public intellectual. I don’t have that kind of confidence or ambition. I want to focus on my own research, on historical work.” Echoing this sentiment, another says, “There are, of course, colleagues who are not to be named who want to be much more public . . . They want to be public intellectuals in my particular field . . . I’m not interested in that.”

Among those who do reach out beyond academia, a sense of the public good serves as motivation for many. “I don’t think our main writing should be academic, frankly,” says one scholar who recognizes that many issues studied by academics deeply affect people in their everyday lives. This individual says, “I think we need to find a way of aiming academic discourse at a public that is perfectly capable of understanding it.” In this vein, another participant has dedicated a great deal of personal time serving as an expert witness in a legal case concerning inaccurate textbook revisions that were being pushed by a special-interest group. According to the scholar, members of this group were more interested in spreading propaganda than educating students about history. Referring to a family law case, the same respondent emphasizes the importance of “educating judges and lawyers” about relevant sources. “you have to go back to our oldest [sacred] texts.”

**Open Access**

Open access is an option for overcoming some of the challenges involved with disseminating scholarly work in Asian studies and making it available to a wider readership, yet participation in this mode of publication is uneven, even as many respondents endorse it. Several publish a handful of articles in open-access journals, but none does so avidly. Reasons cited in support of open access include cultivating a readership, sharing research with those less privileged, providing access in Asian countries, pushing back against monopolistic aggregators, and complying with funding requirements in Europe.
one scholar says, “That’s the way to go. Yeah. Especially because, hey, let’s face it, most libraries can’t afford to buy all these books and all these journals. So, for open access for people in those other universities, it’s heaven-sent. Not only in North America, but also in Europe and in China.” In the words of another respondent, “You’re looking for a journal where you will have the widest audience . . . I used to publish [my scholarly research] in so-called reputable journals. And now I’ll publish anywhere . . . I’ve got a reputation now. Why do I care where my things get published?” One scholar in our sample wishes that open access would catch on for monographs like it has for journals, saying, “If you take it from the ethnographic standpoint, books matter tremendously. We don’t have open access to the books and so that’s a future issue.” Another respondent has started an open-access e-journal for the express purpose of making research more widely available.

These attitudes represent only one side of the story, however, for some scholars express concerns about the open-access publishing model. The most obvious of these is the lack of prestige many such journals offer recent graduates and junior scholars forging their careers: “My students who are newly on the job market . . . I have some misgivings about it in terms of how materials like that would be evaluated for their tenure decisions. I never quite know how best to advise them about what they should do about it.” Other issues also come up, however, such as associated costs, the diversion of research to lesser-known publications with smaller circulations that do not reach the full community of scholars, and a perceived discounting of the value of intellectual labor. Says one respondent, “I think it’s very uncooperative of our scientist friends who get big grants that allow them to pay for open access to drag us along with them. In the humanities and social sciences, we don’t get grants to do that, and the result is that it would be prohibitively expensive to do it even for one article.” Another remarks, “I haven’t made making my work open access a high priority. I like the idea in principle, but I also appreciate the cost and labor of putting out intellectual work. And so maybe information should be free, but it’s not free to create the information. So I’m a little bit of mixed emotions about open access.” It is unclear whether these scholars were aware of the Harvard Open-Access Publishing Equity (HOPE) fund, which is available to reimburse reasonable article processing fees, or the Compact for Open-Access Publishing Equity (COPE) fund, for underwriting publication charges.

**Use of Institutional Repository**

Apart from submitting articles to open-access journals, few of the faculty members we spoke with deposit their work in the Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard (DASH) repository, even though Harvard maintains a nonexclusive, irrevocable right to distribute affiliated authors’ scholarly articles for any non-commercial purpose. Reasons for this include a lack of awareness, insufficient time, and discomfort posting any version (such as an author’s draft or an author’s final version) other than the published version of work. For example, familiarity with the concept of institutional repositories has not fully taken hold among some respondents. One scholar initially expresses confusion when asked about the DASH repository—“I have no idea what DASH is. What is DASH?”—even after previously having been acquainted with it. Recollecting more fully, moments later, this individual realizes, “Oh, things are also on DASH. Yes, they have some of my things there, yes. I think they just download whatever they can find for me.” Another scholar seems to be unaware that peer-reviewed work is eligible for inclusion in DASH: “Web publishing without going through peer review or a journal publication, you just work on an article and you can put it on your own website or department website or Harvard open access. I guess you can do that, but I guess the norm in my field is to go through peer review.” The time and work involved in depositing work in the repository is another issue cited, and some participants desire assistance from staff to do that for them. Says one, “I don’t submit to DASH as much as I should. I have a backlog that I’ve been meaning to send to DASH, but generally, I think DASH is fantastic.” Finally, regarding cases when publishers will not allow final published versions in DASH, respondents say the following: “I just
don’t like to put out things that are not properly finished,” and “I don’t like the idea of making manuscripts which still have flaws in them available when there is a published version.”

Nevertheless, many participants deposit their work in the institutional repository and feel enthusiastic about it. One individual is happy to receive notifications from DASH when publications are downloaded: “Okay, so people are actually looking at this stuff!” Another explains, “I do participate in the university’s DASH system . . . but I haven’t aggressively sought [it] out.” Yet another says, “I have . . . archived a couple of my own work.” Motivation for doing so is often driven by a belief in the value of open access, but professional expectations also inspire some to deposit their articles. States one scholar, “I understood that it was a requirement and so I was largely doing it in fulfilment of that.” Interestingly, it seems that sites like Academia.edu and Research Gate are more prominent on some respondents’ radars than is DASH as vehicles for disseminating scholarship, and this may lead to some confusion related to open access. For example, one scholar who regularly posts material on Academia.edu states the following when asked about making research available through open access: “It’s all open access . . . Academia.edu is open access, everything is.” This comment suggests that the implications of posting work on Academia.edu may not be fully understood.

**The Future of Asian Studies**

One of the survey’s questions asked respondents to describe their “magic wand” wishes, excluding time and money. They then had an opportunity to reflect on the biggest challenges and opportunities currently facing Asian studies. Regarding the wishes they might be granted one faculty member demurs: “As a matter of fact, I have just too much that I could do. I have no wishes. I mean, I'm here in heaven. I'm still in academic heaven.” This positive sentiment is shared by one other respondent. Others, by contrast, are not hesitant in expressing their wishes, although the “time and money” exclusion proved a minor obstacle for some.

A primary wish of many of the respondents revolves around data, its accessibility, its organization, and its searchability. Basically, these faculty would like to have access to as much data as possible in any format—one even refers to the amount of information available as the “bottomless pit.” Not jokingly one scholar wants access to the “30 million manuscripts in India” and goes on to include manuscripts anywhere in the world. They want unfettered access to data without the impediments imposed by a particular country’s copyright laws or political situations. In this regard, both China and Japan are specifically mentioned as obstructionist but also are praised for their respective efforts in making some resources more accessible. The respondents decry laws that require patrons to be on site to access digitized files and countries that block access through bureaucratic regulations.

Secondly, the faculty wants the data to be organized and indexed in such a fashion that the tools for discoverability actually yield germane results. Respondents do not wish to sort through thousands of search results, many of them irrelevant. This includes being able to do more universal keyword searches across platforms and languages. One scholar even wishes for an “intuitive way” of tracking down sources, but is cautious about wishing for too much: This individual actually enjoys going to the physical archives. The same respondent compliments Japanese archives on their metadata with the observation that more is better. Another wants a “master catalog of all the archives in all of South and Southeast Asia and their holdings.”
Some wishes are very specific. One respondent desires access to TV film channels in Asia and reports having to record for hours on end when visiting abroad, simply because this is the only way to have access to particular films. Related to this wish is the desire that the university construct a multimedia conversion center where it is possible to convert all types of historic formats to current, usable formats. This scholar praises the library for acquiring relevant research and for making no judgment about the material because it is deemed “popular literature.”

Other wishes are far-flung and varied. In an age of information overload one scholar visualizes a role for the library and librarians acting as filters for information and informing scholars of the quality of particular material and its relevance for their research. Respondents also bemoan the state of academic writing and urge academia to work to improve the readability of research. Verging into the barred “time and money” zone, a junior faculty member wants to work within a network of graduate students interested in similar topics so that information distribution is shared equally and time is saved. One senior faculty member merely wants “more sophisticated video and recording equipment” that can be used easily in the field. At the same time, this individual wants “release from administrative tasks in the department” to allow more freedom to pursue research. Respondents further note that they would welcome the opportunity to organize all their historic data on the basis of what they now know about technology.

What are the challenges and opportunities that respondents see on the horizon for the future of Asian studies? These center around two pressing challenges: first, to expand existing subdisciplinary boundaries, and second, to remove language barriers by translating more Asian-language scholarship into English. In the responses of nine scholars the words “communication”, “boundaries”, “collaboration”, “specialization”, “multidisciplinary”, “interdisciplinary”, “transregional”, and “cross-disciplinary” predominate. One of these scholars feels that Asian studies must “work beyond some of the old area studies boundaries that still structure our institutions.” Says this individual, “I think that opportunity is a great opportunity in this move towards a more kind of transregional or Inner Asian scholarship where East Asianists start talking to Southeast Asianists and tracing flows between these—across the borders, which really until 20 years ago were really quite siloed.” Another opines, “The globalization of research and the opportunities to think regionally and globally have really improved. I think it is partly a by-product of the easier access to materials, but also a change in attitude [toward Asia].” One scholar goes so far as to say that the university should institutionalize interdisciplinary studies, noting the general immovability of the university in this area.

A particular characteristic of this ghettoization is that scholars and students rarely communicate with others outside their specialization. This applies not only to institutions but also to interactions with colleagues from other countries. A scholar sees increasing opportunities for “more scholarly conversations between Anglophone scholars and scholars from Asia.” Another respondent notes:

> I think now, because of the computer and the Internet and all that, there is much more room for collaboration with our colleagues in Asia . . . Even some obscure writer that I write about, people don’t know that person here but chances are they know it in China. A lot of the basic work justifying a project you don’t need to do if you’re speaking in a Chinese context. Of course, there’s a lot of manpower and a lot of resources also. So somehow to bring these two academic worlds into closer connection, I think that would happen.

More than one respondent mentions the role of language in limiting communication and collaboration. The work of Asian scholars is often unknown to the majority of Western academia, because their work is
not available in translation. There is a certain stigma associated with the translations which are given scant credit, but our respondents feel it is important to make these works available to a broader audience. A respondent explains:

There are grants that promote translations of primary sources and secondary works and so on, but I don’t know how we can resolve this. I think we should just do more. I guess human contact—that interaction that sort of promotes more collaboration, working on a book project together, article projects together and things like that. But the difficulty is each country has different, I guess, protocols and procedures for promotions and things like that. Here in the United States, if you are in the tenure-track system, you’re discouraged from doing any translations within the short period of time you have to publish a book and so many articles and so on.

Closely related to the imperative to break down boundaries are the new challenges and opportunities facing new scholars and graduate students. One scholar says:

One of the problems is that many of the younger scholars are under so much disciplinary pressure to address problems in their particular discipline, but sometimes they lose sight of the really important problems in the country that they’re actually studying. I think also, because we are all specialized, that it’s often difficult to see connections among and comparisons among Asian countries . . . But I think that those disciplinary pressures, and also the pressures of quantification on many younger scholars are quite difficult, and encourage them just to use databases in order to be able to manipulate statistical correlations and so forth. And sometimes forget about all kinds of other very valuable but less quantitative sources, and make it more difficult to answer big questions, and just to try to answer the questions for which there are those sorts of quantitative databases.

However, graduate students and younger scholars are making inroads in tearing down traditional boundaries. Many begin their graduate work with knowledge of more than one Asian language and have often spent time in more than one Asian country doing research. Two respondents specifically mention the changing role that technology will have on graduate training: One feels that students are disadvantaged if they graduate without mastering digital humanities, and the other comments that institutions must build more professional development in graduate programs and incorporate digital scholarship into their expectations.

Finally, one respondent would like to reshape what the Institutional Review Board does for a particular discipline. This individual feels that the Board makes it more difficult to do research abroad, because other countries have emulated the regulations in the United States but made them more rigid. Another faculty member looks forward to the time when OCR and online accessibility are more available and accurate for non-Western scripts. This respondent is excited about the possibilities that digital humanities offer: developing online conferences, online audio materials, and podcasts. The scholar mentions “how life-changing it is to be at Widener—at Harvard and Widener and then to work in this incredibly rich but also incredibly supportive environment where precisely this interaction between scholars, librarians is most productive and the most successful I’ve seen for research.”
CONCLUSION

Our faculty use a variety of means and methods to acquire, manage, store, and preserve their research data. Skill levels and acquaintance with the tools of data acquisition and management vary considerably. Some express frustration at not being able to use said tools more effectively or at not having the requisite knowledge of which tools might best serve their research needs, while a minority are content with their present use of such tools at this point in their career. There is plainly the need for some sort of professional development in the area of research management. Two respondents argue that this development must begin in graduate school and should be a prerequisite for graduation. Another respondent cautions against academic conservatism:

I think one of the biggest challenges, if I reflect back to 20 years of trying different things in getting data from unfamiliar places and in unfamiliar formats and so on, it would be the relative conservatism of academic colleagues to accept newer things. Now, that conservatism, I think, is well founded because I think the onus is on the, in this case, data entrepreneur and data innovator to make the case that the new data are both reliable and informative . . . I wish it were faster. I wish there was less pigheadedness all around, but generally, that is a process you have to go through to move the research methods forward.

Our faculty want unlimited access to data in analog and digital format. Aware of the Pandora’s box that such a wish throws open, they want mediation in accessing this data through discovery tools that work across platforms and languages.

Most of this study’s participants are extremely appreciative of their home institution, the resources of the library, and the role of librarians in their research. However, there is some sentiment that the university has not kept pace with the technology that is required for teaching and research in the digital age, especially as regards the use and storage of audio and visual resources. Another criticism is that the university does not sufficiently recognize the importance of South Asia in the world today and therefore Asian studies is not at the level it should be in a major research institution, although several respondents see positive signs of change on the horizon.

Faculty want the library to continue to collect broadly in both analog and digital formats. They recognize that such a feat is impossible and emphasize the need for the library to collaborate with other institutions in this quest. One faculty member extols the library resources thus:

Coming from Europe, it is unbelievable how rich the collections are. I am only just now beginning to see how wide-reaching they are, and far beyond my field. It just happens to me to look for topics or books that I’m interested in beyond my own research topic in . . . [various languages] . . . and I’m always surprised to see how much is here, indexed, available, and it’s— I’ve never seen that wealth of material and that ease of access elsewhere.

Some respondents recognize the role that librarians play in their teaching and research, but others seem to be unaware of the expertise librarians can offer them. One very grateful faculty member would like to “clone” a particular librarian and prays that the librarian never retires. Another respondent even sees a role for librarians in discovery by their winnowing out from the onslaught of information that which is most important and relevant. This individual wishes librarians could say: “I’ve got these filters now. For Asian studies, you use it this way. For . . . [my subdiscipline within] . . . Asian studies you use it that way,
and that will get you all the materials and only the materials that really matter.” This comment articulates the desire, shared by a majority of those who participated in this study, for a more streamlined and efficient approach to their research.
**APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

| Study Title: Research Support Services Study for the Field of Asian studies |
| Researcher: Michael Hopper, Ramona Islam, Richard Lesage, Kuniko Yamada McVey, Anu Vedantham |
| Version Date: – May 18, 2017 |

**Participation is voluntary**

It is your choice whether or not to participate in this research. If you choose to participate, you may change your mind and leave the study at any time. Refusal to participate or stopping your participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to examine the research practices of academics in Asian studies in order to understand the resources and services these faculty members need to be successful in their teaching and research. This local Harvard study is part of a larger suite of parallel studies with other institutions of higher education in the U.S., coordinated by Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research and consulting service. The information gathered at Harvard will also be included in a landmark final report by Ithaka S+R and will be essential for Harvard Library to further understand how the needs of Asian studies scholars are evolving.

**How long will I take part in this research?**

Your participation will involve one-hour interviews with 15 to 20 people over approximately six months. We may follow-up with you after your interview within this period in order to clarify any information.

**What can I expect if I take part in this research?**

As a participant, you will take part in a 60 minute audio-recorded interview about your research practices and support needs as an Asian studies scholar. We also may take photographs to document your work space, however, you will not appear in the photographs. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in the interview at any time for any reason.

**What are the risks and possible discomforts?**

If you choose to participate, there are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Subjects may experience benefits in the form of increased insight and awareness into their own research practices and needs.

**If I take part in this research, how will my privacy be protected? What happens to the information you collect?**

If you choose to participate, your name will not be linked to your interview responses or work space photographs at any time. We do not include your name on any of the interview data and there is no link between this consent form and your responses. An exception is that the information with your name on it will be analyzed by the researcher(s) and may be reviewed by people checking to see that the research is done properly; the information may also be seen by transcribers.

**If I have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research study, who can I talk to?**
The researcher for this study is Ramona Islam, who can be reached at rislam@fas.harvard.edu, (617) 384-5848, or at Widener Library Room 220, 1329 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. The faculty sponsor is Anu Vedantham who can be reached at vedantham@harvard.edu, (617) 998-5172, or at Lamont Library Room B10 1329 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints,

- If you would like to talk to the research team,
- If you think the research has harmed you, or
- If you wish to withdraw from the study.

This research has been reviewed by the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research at Harvard University. They can be reached at 617-496-2847, 1414 Massachusetts Avenue, Second Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138, or cuhs@fas.harvard.edu for any of the following:

- If your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team,
- If you cannot reach the research team,
- If you want to talk to someone besides the research team, or
- If you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Statement of Consent
I have read the information in this consent form. All my questions about the research have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand and consent to participate in the study as described above by being interviewed and being audio-recorded during the interview.

SIGNATURE
Your signature below indicates your permission to take part in this research. You will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

_______________________________  ________________
Printed name of participant  

_______________________________  ________________
Signature of participant  Date

_______________________________  ________________
Signature of interviewer  Date
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Research focus and methods
1. Describe your current research focus/projects.
2. How is your research situated within the field of Asian studies? [Probe for how/does their work engage with any other fields or disciplines?]
3. What research methods do you typically use to conduct your research? [Probe for how those methods relate to work done by others in Asian studies/in the other fields they engage with]
   a. Do you collaborate with others as part of your research? [If yes, probe for what these collaborations entail, who typically works on them and what the division of work is]
   b. Does your research elicit data? [If so, probe for what kinds of data typically elicited, how they incorporate this data into their final research outputs and how they manage and store this data for their ongoing use]

Information Access and Discovery
4. [Beyond the data your research produces] What kinds of primary information do you rely on to do your research?
   a. How do you locate this information?
   b. What are the greatest challenges you experience working with this kind of information?
   c. How do you manage and store this information for your ongoing use?
5. What kinds of secondary information do you rely on to do your research? E.g. monographs, peer reviewed articles.
   a. How do you locate this information?
   b. What are the greatest challenges you experience working with this kind of information?
   c. How do you manage and store this information for your ongoing use?
6. Think back to a past or ongoing research project where you faced challenges in the process of finding and accessing information.
   a. Describe these challenges.
   b. What could have been done to mitigate these challenges?
7. How do you keep up with trends in your field more broadly?

Dissemination Practices
8. Where do you typically publish your scholarly research? [Probe for kinds of publications and what disciplinary audiences they typically seek to engage with].
   a. Do you disseminate your research beyond scholarly publications? [If so, probe for where they publish and why they publish in these venues]
   b. How do your publishing practices relate to those typical to your discipline?
9. Have you ever made your research data, materials or publications available through open access? (e.g. through an institutional repository, open access journal or journal option)
   a. If so, where and what has been your motivations for pursuing open dissemination channels? (i.e. required, for sharing, investment in open access principles)
   b. If no, why not?
State of the Field and Wrapping Up

10. If I gave you a magic wand that could help you with your research and publication process [except for more money or time] – what would you ask it to do?
11. What future challenges and opportunities do you see for the broader field of Asian studies?
12. Is there anything else about your experiences as a scholar of Asian studies and/or the Asian studies as a field that you think it is important for me to know that was not covered in the previous questions?
APPENDIX C: BROAD CODING STRUCTURE, EMERGENT FROM TRANSCRIPTS

**Theme 1: Research Topics/Field of Asian Studies/Impact**

**Top-Level Codes:**
- Research Topics
- Identity of Scholar Within the Field
- How Field of Study Relates to Asian Studies
- Emerging Research Topics
- Current Assessment of the State of Asian Studies and Future Directions
- University’s Failures in Field

**Theme 2: Research Methods/Habits/Practices**

**Top-Level Codes:**
- Research Methods Employed
- Archival Research Method
- Field Research Method
- Collaboration (Interdisciplinary and International)
- Engagement with Other Fields
- Relational Aspect
- Keeping Up with Trends
- Emerging Research Methods
- Challenges and Opportunities

**Theme 3: Information Access**

**Top-Level Codes:**
- Discovery
- Primary Sources, Location of Information
- Secondary Sources
- Online Access and Databases
- Library Holdings, Collections Crucial for Research
- Acquisitions Logistics
- Role of Library in Locating Sources
- Understanding the Library System
- Linguistic and Cultural Considerations
- Copyright/Laws
- Technology
- Organizing Research
- Political and Legal Dimensions of Scholarship
- Challenges and Opportunities

**Theme 4: Data and Digital Scholarship**

**Top-Level Codes:**
- Data Collection/Elicitation
- Annotating
- Generating New Data
- Sharing Data
STORING AND PRESERVING DATA
DIGITAL HUMANITIES
ACCESSIBILITY OF DATA FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Theme 5: Dissemination of Scholarship
Top-Level Codes:
PUBLISHING
NECESSITY TO PUBLISH IN SCHOLARLY JOURNALS
OPEN ACCESS
AT CONFERENCES
AUDIENCE
CHOICE OF PUBLISHER
DISSEMINATION TO NON-ACADEMIC COMMUNITY
ORAL (TALKS)
TEACHING
DISSEMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIP IN RARER LANGUAGES THROUGH TRANSLATIONS
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES