SR 848-64/SR802-54 Library of Congress Reading and Research

Steven Mills

Omega Graduate School

Date (July 15, 2024)

Professor

Dr. David Ward

# Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while developing your literature review. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor your progress on the research project literature review as a result of the course. Project how the research form this course will support your Action Research Project Proposal. The course learning journal should be 3-5 pagesin length and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** – Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.
2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or challenged you*– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*
3. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or *adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?
4. **Conclusion** – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction**

According to the syllabus, the outcome for SR 848-64/SR 802-5 is to help the student choose and apply academic research tools. Being privileged to take this course at the beginning of my program will set the stage for doing proper research for all subsequent courses. This course reinforced the theories learned in SR 953 Research for the 21st Century and helped solidify the information through a week of practical application. It would be advantageous for every student to take this course when they have an idea for their project or dissertation. The sooner this course is taken, the greater the student’s efficiency in research will be for the entirety of their program of study.

The key elements in this course are accessing research resources, using online research methods, managing collected research, and beginning a literature review research product. These key elements allow the student to streamline the use of their time at the Library of Congress by laying out the path to follow. By keeping these critical elements in mind during the week at the Library of Congress, the student can guard against chasing rabbits rather than concentrating on their primary research objectives.

**Personal Growth**

It was amazing how much was learned about research methods from interacting with Dr. Ward and the research librarians. After doing research for a bachelor's thesis, a master's project, and a doctoral dissertation, I assumed that I knew how to do research. My research methodology was limited to going to a library, spending hours finding books on the subject matter, and writing notes on 3x5 cards. This trip to the Library of Congress showed me that in the past, I had only put my toe into the water of research. Learning to use online databases to find peer-reviewed articles and dissertations was eye-opening. The suggestion to use the bibliographies in the material opened many doors to further research. As a result of these “tricks,” my research was taken to another level, and I found more information than I dreamed was available.

I desire to visit the Library of Congress every year as I continue to work on my Action Research Project and beyond as I develop curricula for the organizations I work with. As a result of this course, my online research methods have improved, and I have been able to use my local library for more significant results. As a side note, my love for libraries has been renewed due to the week spent in the Library of Congress.

**Reflective Entry**

Before joining Omega Graduate School, I was doing research on a problem I had experienced for many years as a missionary in Africa. Cultural, religious, and political identities caused many believers to distance themselves from other believers, causing division in churches and ministries. I desired to solve this problem and create a curriculum to bring about an identity change where every believer’s identity was that of a Christian before culture, religion, or political affiliation. With the limited resources available then, I found myself fighting an uphill battle as there seemed to be very little information on the subject. As a result of this course and the trip to the Library of Congress, the research librarians were able to help me focus and expand my research by giving me valuable tips and insights into proper research. This led to me finding more than sixty sources of current research on identity transformation. This course and my time at the Library of Congress allowed me to make tremendous headway in forming the foundational outline for my doctoral research project. It also gave me the tools to do further research as I continue working on my project. As stated before, I am glad that I was able to make this trip at the beginning of my coursework. Because of what I learned about research in the Library of Congress, the research needed in all future courses will be easier and more streamlined. This experience set me up to be a lifelong researcher and will help me in my role as a curriculum developer for Vision International University. My sermon preparation has benefited from the advanced research techniques learned in this course. I think I am a better teacher due to this course.

**Conclusion**

This course has surpassed all expectations that I had entering the course. I have come to understand the problem I saw with cultural identity harming church unity in Africa can best be resolved through theological education. The result of my Action Research Project is creating a curriculum addressing identity transformation that can be used in discipleship groups, bible college classrooms, and bible studies throughout African churches. By taking this course, I will be more effective in my research to develop this curriculum.

Thank you for allowing me to take this course so early in my academic program. I plan to visit the Library of Congress several times as I work on my doctoral research project. I am also looking forward to the University of Oxford trip.

**Steven, I am very impressed with your Course Learning Journal for SR 848-64/SR 802-52! Your reflections on what you learned through the LOC experience were fantastic. This comment made me say Amen out loud when I read it, "It would be advantageous for every student to take this course when they have an idea for their project or dissertation. The sooner this course is taken, the greater the student’s efficiency in research will be for the entirety of their program of study."**

**You also made great connections about how what you found at LOC is advancing your own academic and professional goals in your international ministry. I would love to see some of the sources you found on identity transformation! That is at the heart of biblical life change that can bear fruit in changing the world. That is true of church in culture on every continent!**

**You were my right hand of help on the trip and I want to thank you for how you helped me and fellow students.**

**I hope you can come on the trip this summer! What an asset you would be. You will be much more focused with your Action Research idea by then and that will help you find even more great research!**

**Keep up the excellent work, Steven! -- Prof. David Ward**