

Introduction to Research for Graduate and Post-Graduate Studies

Introduction

In the educational experience one soon learns that they cannot “know” everything; the expansion of the fields of knowledge in almost every area are expanding at an almost exponential rate. The goal of this section is not to help you *know* everything there is to know in Biblical and theological studies; but rather, how to *find* everything you need to know, and then be able to keep track of it for ready recall.

Research is defined as, “a careful search or inquiry after; an endeavor to discover facts by scientific study of a subject; a course of critical investigation.” For the purposes of seminary education research also has the particular purpose or objective of gathering material in preparation to present a written report or a verbalized presentation, such as a sermon. We are not engaged in research for the sake of research as the world often does (2 Tim 3:7) or simply for the vain acquisition of knowledge (1 Cor 8:1). We are, however, engaged in a discipline where the acquisition of true knowledge is paramount (2 Tim 2:15; Ezra 7:10) and the impartation of that knowledge is the cornerstone of our ministry (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:2).

In his excellent text on Biblical and theological research Gregory Bolich states:

Theological research accordingly takes on the character of what Anselm termed *fides quaerens intellectum*, “faith in search of understanding.” The objective knowledge to which a theologian gains access by faith still requires the application of rigorous thought. Although faith is the precondition to attaining knowledge and making right use of it, it is accompanied by a following-after intellect. Faith in the quest for understanding makes capable use of reason and empirical knowledge. The knowledge, however, rests not on a foundation of *cognito, ergo sum*, “I think therefore I am” (Descartes’ rationalism), but of *credo, ut intelligam*, “I believe in order to understand.”¹

The Process of Formal Research

There are several distinct steps or stages of research:

- Selecting a topic or area of study
- Initial or preliminary research
- Formulating a thesis
- Detailed or formal research on the subject
- Development of the outline
- Writing the first draft
- Supplemental research to fill in holes or answer new questions
- Finalize the written product

The authors of our basic text, *The Craft of Research*, point out:

Many current guides recognize that researchers do not move sequentially from finding a topic to stating a thesis to filling in note cards to drafting and revision. As anyone who has done it knows, real research

¹ Gregory G. Bolich. *The Christian Scholar: An Introduction to Theological Research*. (Landham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986), p. 23.

loops back and forth, moving forward a step or two, going back while at the same time anticipating stages not yet begun, then moving forward again.²

The following is a description of the eight-step approach to research of a topic and the preparation needed to make a presentation of your research. The actual research tools and methods will be discussed more fully in subsequent lectures. This will simply serve as a template for future discussions.

Selecting a Topic or Area of Study

There are papers where the student has some choice in selecting the topic that they are going to research and write on; and there are others, of course, which the assignments must simply be done. Major papers in seminar classes and a thesis, project, or dissertation will normally be on the topic of the student's choosing. There are several things to consider when making a topic selection.

- ***Personal Interest:*** The researcher must have some level of interest and even emotion about the topic. If the paper is simply viewed as a burden or “necessary evil” then it will certainly lack any real long-term benefit.
- ***Scope:*** The scope of the paper must match the type of paper and amount of space available. For example, you cannot write on the subject: “The History of Christianity” in a 25-page research paper. You must narrow the scope considerably. Even in a thesis or dissertation, the scope of topic must be fairly narrow. 200 pages may sound like a lot of writing, but for a good topic it really isn't.³
- ***Topical Interest:*** This is different than personal interest. The question here is twofold: (1) is there anyone who agrees with my position and (2) is there anyone who disagrees with my position? If there is no one at all who agrees with you, chances are your position is flawed. If everyone agrees with your position, your paper is entirely unnecessary.
- ***Benefit:*** This is more important for a thesis and it is the *sina qua non* for a dissertation. The question here is how are you going to advance the discussion or body of knowledge? For example, you may be personally excited about a topic and there may be topical interest with people of stature on all sides of the argument; but can you actually say anything new or unique or present a perspective that will be valuable? It is the “beating a dead horse” syndrome. Perhaps the best illustration on this is the *doctrine of election*. I seriously doubt that there is anything that could be written on this subject that has not already been considered from every possible angle.
- ***Measurability:*** This is a question that really will primarily apply to Doctor of Ministry projects but may apply to other work as well. By measurability we mean that there must be a method of testing the accuracy of the conclusion or the intended goal (particularly in a project). Something is not true or successful just because you said it was. The other important thing here is to actually *define* success.

As we have previously noted, good papers and well-spent time in research will be beneficial for a lifetime. One writer has said this:

When the research student first considers selecting and narrowing a field of study, personal interest in the topic is an important beginning point, because in most cases engagement with the field will extend considerably beyond the three-or four-year period of graduate studies.⁴

² Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. ix.

³ A general “survey” of some theme, Biblical book, etc., is normally not an acceptable style for a thesis or dissertation.

⁴ James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works and Methods*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), p. 63-64.

Initial or preliminary research

Once a tentative topic has been settled upon the first task is to do some preliminary research on the subject. This will entail the casting the net as widely as possible. Here the researcher will normally examine reference works and broadly based works.

Formulating a thesis

After the initial research you should be about to formulate a thesis. The question here is what is the point of your paper? What are you trying to either prove or disprove? A thesis statement should be a one or at the most two paragraph statement of the above. Booth, Colomb and Williams state:

The central point of every report is its major claim, its main point or general thesis. It is the culmination of your analysis, the statement of what your research means. But if you want your readers to change their minds about something important to them, you cannot simply assert that claim; you have to give them good reasons, reliable evidence for believing it. This pair, claim and evidence, constitutes the conceptual core of every research report.⁵

Detailed or formal research on the subject

Now begins the difficult work of detailed research. Here we begin to cull the bibliographies of the reference works we examined in our initial research and gather sources of information and the presentations of arguments both in support of and in opposition to our thesis. Here it is also important to remember the difference between “primary sources”, “secondary sources” and “tertiary sources.”

- *Primary Sources* are what we strive to interact with. These are the original works or sources. For example, any English Bible translation is a “secondary source,.” Not primary, “this is why we study Greek and Hebrew.”⁶ An example of a *primary source* would be John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- *Secondary Sources* are either translations or works “about” another work or person. For example, Benjamin B. Warfield’s work, *Calvin and Calvinism*, would be considered a secondary source.
- *Tertiary Sources* are even one more step removed from the original. Strictly speaking, a Bible paraphrase such as the Living Bible, would be a tertiary source, since it is neither the original, nor an actual translation. For example, a work about Warfield’s view of Calvinism, would be a tertiary source.

Development of the outline

Now that research is in an advanced state it is time to begin to put together the outline. The outline is like a skeleton. It is the bones on which the flesh hangs. There needs to be a logical order and flow to your thinking and presentation and the outline helps you to do that. This is also the time where you will “process” the information you have acquired. As Davis states:

In the synthetic phase the goal is to process the various informational inputs and reach a conclusion. This involves reading the sources, taking notes, and mentally organizing the material. The information must

⁵ *Craft of Research*, p. 94.

⁶ Allen P. Ross. *Sharpening Your Skills in Research and Writing*. (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 4.

not only be read and filed, but more importantly assessed and weighed. What arguments and considerations are emerging as central and compelling ones?⁷

The outline is not something to be taken lightly or haphazardly. As stated in the *Craft of Research*:

Readers look first for the core of an argument, for its claims and two kinds of support: reasons and evidence. In the sequence of reasons, they see the outline of the logical structure of its support. If they do not see that structure, they are likely to judge your argument shapeless, even incoherent.⁸

Writing the first draft

Eventually you have to begin the process of actually writing. By “first draft” I don’t mean something that is just thrown together without regard for proper grammar and syntax, but it is also not the final polished product. In this process you need to become friends with Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writer’s of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). And, unless your English prose is impeccable, you should get to know Diana Hacker’s *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* 4th edition (Boston, Massachusetts: Bedford Books of Saint Martins Press, 1994).⁹

This draft will be something that you can mark up, write notes in and use as your working model to revise your paper. As Ross states, “you need not slow down to perfect the paragraphs until you have written though the entire paper. Your quest is to get all of your ideas on paper in the best order so that you may work with them more efficiently.”¹⁰

Supplemental research to fill in holes or answer new questions

Writing the first draft and then reading it will invariably lead to some unanswered questions from either yourself or your professor (if this is a thesis or dissertation). Those questions will lead you to do some supplemental research on one or more of the points in question. This will be very pointed and specific and should already be at hand from material obtained in the Formal Research phase. If too many original works start showing up or items you had not previously considered, your paper may be in serious trouble and you may have to circle back a few steps and take a long look at where you are at.

Of course if a new book or new journal article has suddenly appeared you cannot simply pretend it does not exist, you need to integrate it into your work and move forward, even if it delays your final production. But one thing you can do to avoid this is to look at some of the common publishers catalogues or web sites to see previews of forthcoming works.

Finalize the written product

There does finally come the day when all research must stop and you have to finish the work! This is the polished finalized writing. Of course even this step has two parts. When you finish the “final” draft it is still a “draft” you should have someone proofread the paper for you and make the corrections necessary. One problem with the process of writing is that you live with a paper so long that you begin to mentally read what it should say instead of what it does say. One word from C. S. Lewis about writing is helpful here:

⁷ John Jefferson Davis. *Theological Primer: Resources for the Theological Student*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981), p.13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁹ See the *Research Bibliography* for additional resources. Some of these are a matter of personal preference. Many have used Strunk and White for many years, and while it is a good grammar and syntax guide, I just prefer the layout and ease of use of Hacker.

¹⁰ Ross, *Sharpening*, p. 6.

The way for a person to develop style is (a) to know exactly what he wants to say and (b) to be sure he is saying exactly that. The reader, we must remember, does not start by knowing what we mean. If our words are ambiguous, our meaning will escape him. I sometimes think that writing is like driving sheep down a road. If there is a gate open to the left or the right the readers will most certainly go into it.¹¹

An Overview of Biblical and Theological Research

Theological research is a unique endeavor in that the research and conclusions of the past are not easily overturned by newly discovered “facts.” Unlike a textbook on a scientific subject that is essentially obsolete and worthless 10 years after its publication, the outstanding works in Biblical and theological studies continue to make a valuable contribution for decades and even centuries.

Sources for Research

- *Book and Monograph Resources:* In the English speaking world nearly ½ million new print titles appear annually, of those nearly 250,000 are in the area of religion (as broadly defined); and perhaps as many as 50,000 are broadly related to Biblical and theological studies. There are over 3000 publishers dedicated to religious publications. The average price of books in Biblical and theological studies has risen in the past 20 years from about \$17.50 in 1985 to nearly \$50.00 today.

To maintain currency in this literature is a daunting task¹² for the library and it is difficult for an individual scholar to simply keep current in his own discipline or sub-discipline. This is where the sections on “Essential Indexes and Bibliographic Reference,” “Key Informational Sites” (on the Internet), and the “Online Databases” (at TMS) in the *Research Bibliography* in this syllabus will provide invaluable starting point for research.

- *Periodical Literature:* There are over 3500 current titles directly related to Biblical and theological studies and another 1200 “dead” titles¹³ that are significant for research. The cost of such publications is also staggering. To subscribe to all of the titles would require an expenditure of well over \$½ million per year. The Master’s Seminary library currently subscribes to about 800 of the most important titles and those that have been determined to be particularly germane to our educational objectives. The library also holds significant runs in about 350 of the “dead” titles.

Beyond these titles there are multiple dozens of church and organizational newsletters, position paper publications, and other ephemeral literature that can also provide significant informational material.

- *Other Theological Literature:* There are several other avenues of material to consider in this field of study. They include:
 - *Reference Works:* There are about 6000 basic reference works with valuable content for Biblical and theological studies.
 - *Rare Books and Manuscripts:* Prior to the invention of the moveable type printing press all “books” were copied by hand. Any literature produced prior to 1500 is technically referred to as *incunabulum*. All books printed before 1850, or 1880 in some libraries, are classified as “rare”

¹¹ C. S. Lewis. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), p. 263.

¹² On average the library staff examines 10-15 publisher catalogues per week, searching for new materials for the library.

¹³ By “dead” titles we mean those periodicals that have ceased publication or have been replaced or superseded by a new title or format.

and are typically housed in special collections.¹⁴ Materials printed prior to the American Civil War are typically in good condition when it comes to the actual pages as the paper was of a “rag” or cotton fiber type. After the Civil War wood pulp paper began to be used, which has a decidedly shorter life span. The paper used by publishers in America and Great Britain between about 1938-1965 is among the worst ever used and many of the titles from that era are vanishing from shelves as the books literally burn up. Since about 1965 advances in technology and the development of “acid free” paper along with higher standards in the publishing industry have led to a much great lifespan for books today.

- *Microforms*: A great number of now lost or inaccessible publications were fortunately photographed and converted to microfilm or microfiche format. Also in this format are society papers, theses and dissertations.
- *CD-ROM and Web based Materials*: CD-ROM collections of books (or e-Books) are now becoming more accessible. Using the STEP or LOGOS formatting they are a valuable addition to the available resources, although they are not without their own problems.
- *Non-Print Media*: DVD’s Videos, CD’s digital files, slides, and other such media are growing in importance and cannot be ignored. Some of the best work in geography and archaeology in the Holy Land are being provided via non-print media resources.

Theological and Academic Degrees

It is sometimes helpful to know the meaning of the degree listed in association with a particular author. Both the nature and nomenclature of degrees has changed quite a bit in the last century.¹⁵ Also, as a reminder, the classifications of academic work are as follows:

- *Under-Graduate*: A Bachelor or four-year degree
- *Graduate*: A Master’s level degree
- *Post-Graduate*: A Doctoral Level degree or additional Master’s level work beyond the initial degree

Here is a brief listing a degree designations:

- *Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.)* Originally called an A.B.. This is now the standard four-year degree designation.¹⁶
- *Master of Arts (M.A.) or Master of Science (M. S.)* Originally called an A.M. This is now the standard graduate degree designation.
- *Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) Juris Doctor (J.D. for lawyers¹⁷)*. These are the standard doctoral or “terminal” degree designations.

¹⁴ It should be noted that “rare” does not equate to monetary value. For example an early edition (say 1880) of Charles Hodge’s *Systematic Theology* is of no more monetary value than a modern re-printing of the same work. An early edition would only gain monetary value if it were signed or stamped with the ownership mark of a famous individual or institution. A “first edition” may possess more monetary value, depending on several factors including the (1) author, (2) nature or importance of the work, (3) its relative popularity with collectors or researchers, (4) the number of copies extant, and (5) whether there are any special features of the particular volume (for instance were the wood-cut engravings by a noted artist, or where they actually hand-coloured, etc. Any edition actually autographed by the author also increases the relative value, again depending on how many he may have actually autographed. With rare books it comes down to the basic laws of supply and demand.

¹⁵ As late as the 19th century there were only a few different degrees, now there are over 1500 different kinds. Mostly they are the standard degrees with descriptive names attached, both for marketing purposes and for actual clarification. For example, the MLIS is a *Master of Arts in Library and Information Science*.

¹⁶ In the Community College system there is still a two-year degree, and A.A. or A.S. (Associate of Arts or Science). These were useful degrees until about 20 years ago; they now carry almost no academic weight.

In Biblical and Theological studies there are some specialized degrees:

- *Bachelor of Theology* (B.T. or B.Th.). This degree is no longer widely used. Until the 1920's this was roughly the equivalent to a masters degree.
- *Master of Divinity* (M.Div.). This designation replaced the older B.D. degree early in the last century. It is now the standard or foundational graduate degree for Biblical and Theological studies.
- *Master of Theology* (Th.M.) The normal designation for a "post-graduate" degree in Biblical and theological studies. Geared towards research and those working towards an academic ministry.
- *Doctor of Theology* (Th.D.) The doctoral or "terminal" degree in Biblical and theological studies. Builds on the Th.M. and is geared towards research and an academic ministry. Not a few seminaries have replaced this designation with the more academically accepted Ph.D.
- *Doctor of Ministry* (D.Min.). A professional degree usually building directly off of the M.Div. The quality and rigor of these programs vary greatly.
- *Doctor Divinity* (D.D.) or *Doctor of Literature* (D. Litt.). These are now reserved as "honorary degrees" awarded to those who have made significant contributions or for a lifetime of contributions. In older works (19th century) the D.D. was a standard academic degree in some institutions.

How to Read Effectively and Efficiently

The most important skill that needs to be developed for success in seminary is that of Reading. Everyone can improve their reading skills and no one should be allowed to fall into the excuse that, "I'm just not a reader." For a good introduction to critical reading and issues to consider, see the *section on Appreciating and Writing Book Reviews* in this syllabus.

The classic work on improving reading and comprehension skills is: *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1972). This work is noted in the Research bibliography and highly recommended. If your reading skills are suspect or if you just want some helpful tips, I recommend buying this book and incorporating it into your current studies.

In brief, the authors detail four levels of reading skill:

- *Level One: Elementary Reading.* This type of reading characterized by learning the basic mechanics. Typically these skills were learned to one degree or another in elementary school. However, as the authors note you have to return to this level on occasion. Those in seminary who are beginning the study of Greek and Hebrew are starting at this level once again. Additionally, even those who are literate in English will return here when new levels of vocabulary are required when old habits, which are hindering good reading, are getting in the way.
- *Level Two Inspectional Reading.* The authors call this level "the art of skimming systematically."¹⁸ Here, as we note also in the section on *Book Reviewing*, you are about the business of determining what the particular book is about. Reading the table of contents, the introduction or preface, the publicity statements, the author's background bio, the statements of recommendation. It will also involve reading a few well-chosen paragraphs at the beginning and end of chapters. Learning the skills at this level will save you time and help you wade through a great number of books, as you look for the chosen few that can actually help your research. This is reading under the pressure and constraints of time and task.

¹⁷ Just a note of trivia, even though lawyers complete a doctoral level degree, they are not referred to as "doctor" as a title before their name; but rather *Esquire* (Esq.) after their name.

¹⁸ Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*. (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1972), p. 18.

- *Level Three: Analytical Reading.* The author's states that this level is, "thorough reading, complete reading, or good reading—the best reading your can do."¹⁹ This is reading with no time limits, it is the full integration of an author's material and grasping or understanding both his content and argument. Adler quotes Francis Bacon who stated, "some books are to be tasted, other are to be swallowed, and some few are to be chewed and digested."²⁰
- *Level Four: Syntopical Reading.* This is the highest level of reading and the one that is necessary for this highest level of writing. As the title suggests comparative reading, but it is more than that, it is the ability to "construct an analysis of the subject that may not be in any of the books."²¹ Adler details five steps in *Syntopical Reading*, they are:
 - *Step 1: Finding the Relevant Passages.* This is your investigation of the matter, you are bringing your skills to bear on the matter, so what you want to know is paramount, not what the author wanted to tell you.
 - *Step 2: Bringing the Authors to Terms.* Making the authors of various works understood by the terms that you have chosen.
 - *Step 3: Getting the Questions Clear.* What are the questions in this matter that need to be answered?
 - *Step 4: Defining the Issues.* This is both employing the Law of Non-Contradiction to the matter (that is, two authors saying opposite things cannot both be correct) and arranging the controversies in a systematic order whereby the key matters and secondary or tertiary issues are separated.
 - *Step 5: Analyzing the Discussion.* This is where we examine all of the key issues and make evaluative judgments on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each. We at least reach our own conclusion and perhaps persuade others as well.

Adler also states:

If you are reading in order to become a better reader, you cannot read just any book or article. You will not improve as a reader if all you read are books that are within your capacity. You must tackle books that are over your head. Only books of that sort will make you stretch your mind. And unless you stretch, you will not learn.²²

There are additional benefits to wide and varied reading. Reading classic works and excellent prose will help you to improve your own vocabulary and indirectly help your own writing. Seeing how material is effectively organized and efficiently presented will give your own mind a template to do likewise. This type of reading will open new avenues of interest and new sources of information that can be harnessed and used by God in your writing, preaching and teaching. Beyond this as Adler states:

Reading well, which means reading actively, is thus not only a good in itself, nor is it merely a means to advancement in our work or career. It also serves to keep our minds alive and growing.²³

How to Study Effectively and Efficiently

As my favorite fictional detective Nero Wolfe often said to people who would ramble and carry on without getting to the point, "You sir, need to stop and put your mind in order." To effectively and efficiently study you

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 20.

²² Ibid., p. 339.

²³ Ibid., p. 346.

first of all need to “order your mind.” You need to put both your space and mental processes in a proper state in order to be able to study and retain the data you are accumulating.

Before we look at some specific steps in study, we must answer to Shakespeare’s command to “Know thyself.” What kind of person are you? I’m not talking about character, I’m talking mechanics. Are you a morning person (like Dr. Mayhue who often arises at 3AM) or a night person (like myself). While there are times when you just have to “do it.” There is little sense in wasting your time trying to alter the biomechanical facts of your existence ☺. Do you like silence when you study, a little background music, or like me something a little louder? Can you “multi-task”? That is can you have a couple of projects open at once and move seamlessly between them or are you a “one thing at a time” person?

The problem here is not trying to alter your being, but working with what and who you are. For example, if your checkbook is always out of balance and unkempt; getting a computer program, like *Quicken*, is not going to help. You’ll just transfer the frustrations of an unkempt paper register to a fancy electronic one. This applies to computers in general and all of the Bible assistance programs available. Before you buy anything beyond a computer with the required word processing, Internet and email programs that you simply have to learn to use, you need to answer the questions about what kind of student are you?

There simply is not a “one size fits all” method of study, but there are some basic principles to follow to make your time effective and efficient.

- *Step One: Get Organized.* This is necessary for everyone. You need all the materials at hand, you need to have your personal library in some order (we’ll talk about Pro Cite later in this course) so you don’t waste time looking for things that should be right at hand and have the little things like paper, pens, sticky notes, etc., all ready to go.
- *Step Two: Get What You Must Have.* As we noted in the *Research Bibliography*, you need a dictionary, you need the required texts for the courses, you need the syllabi and you need a good text Bible. If you are relatively new at Biblical and theological study, look at my web page at <http://www.tms.edu/50books.asp> for the *50 Books Every Christian Should Own*.
- *Step Three: Get Ready.* The facts of life are that most of us need get exercise, eat and sleep to keep our bodies functioning properly. In times of stress and pressure, some of these things can be avoided for a while, but not indefinitely. People ask me sometimes how is the best way to prepare for an exam on this or that. The first thing I always tell them is to eat a good meal and get a good night’s sleep the night before. Remember that cramming for an exam will quickly reach a point of diminishing return. You would be better off stopping and getting some sleep, than trying to do marathon study sessions on a regular basis.

The Classroom

Seminary is centered in the classroom primarily around lecturing. Like students, every professor is different. Some are dominating lecturers who neither like nor encourage questions in the classroom while some are freer flowing. Some lecture by pretty much reading their syllabus to you and some will lecture about points no where to be found in the syllabus. You need to figure out what kind of what kind of instructor the particular professor is and then strive to get the most out of the course and extract as much knowledge and experience from the professor as your can. Here are some points for the classroom:

- *Note-Taking:* In almost every setting some notes will be required. Even the professor who is reading his syllabus will occasionally deviate and say something important. Note taking is a personal skill. Some are detailed and some just need a few key words to remember the point. But remember as soon as possible you need to flesh out the notes with more detail (usually in your syllabus) so that you retain the information. Skimpy notes will typically become meaningless in 48-72 hours. I typically write my notes on the left blank page of a syllabus so they are easily read next to the main set of notes.

- *Questions in Class:* Remember, not all professors like a lot of questions in class. Be judicious in what you ask. Avoid stream of consciousness questions, where you are treating the lecture like a conversation between you and the professor. Remember, there are other students in the class. Listen to the lecture and wait to see if your question isn't answered shortly. If you have a question at a certain point, that point has likely entered the mind of the professor as well; and he will deal with it at the right time in the lecture. It is usually best to wait until there is a transition in the lecture to ask a question. Above all be polite, never argue with the professor; and be pointed and concise, don't ask rambling open-ended questions. Think through your question and ask it in as few words as possible. Remember what your mother told you, "There are no stupid questions." Well, she was wrong, there are!
- *Appointments with Professors:* Sometimes you are well advised to personally make an appointment with a professor to ask questions about the material or to get some guidance for the course or some aspect of the course. When you do this try to write your questions out ahead of time, be on time to the scheduled appointment and be as brief as possible. Even use email to correspond if making an appointment is difficult.
- *Integrate When Possible:* There will be multiple courses in each semester. Try to creatively figure out how research in one class can be used in another. Remember of course, you may not turn in the same paper to two different professors for different courses. But when you can, write on different aspects of the same basic topic so that your research will flow into two channels from the same stream.

The Bibliographic Chain

The Bibliographic Chain, as articulated by Robert J. Kepple, is an effort to detail the steps that are involved in the process of moving from concept to a widely distributed printed work. It is helpful to a certain degree to know the steps so that you can understand the relative value of different research materials. The chain runs as follows:

- The Idea
- Human Resources: information and conversation from friends and colleagues
- Institutional Resources: notes, tapes, charts, sketches, databases, Internet discussion groups or any semi-formal presentation of the developing idea
- Work in Progress: ongoing study and collection of data
- In House Report or a More Formalized Technical Paper (usually six months to a year from the original idea)
- Unpublished studies: Society Conferences, Workshops, News Group Posting (usually 1-2 years after the idea)
- Dissertation or Thesis (usually 3-4 years from the original idea)
- Journal Article: either a synthesis of the entire thesis or dissertation or a selected portion (usually 5 years from the original idea).
- Book or Monograph (usually 10 years or so from the original idea).
- Becomes part of the body of knowledge.

The "chain" is certainly not absolute as it assumes a particular academic track. But the concept remains the same. Here is another example:

- In 2001 I wrote a review of John Noe's *Beyond the End Times: The Reset of the Greatest Story Ever Told* (Bradford, Pennsylvania, 1999) in *The Master's Seminary Journal* 12:1 (Spring 2001), p. 119-21.
- That book review lead me to further investigate the movement that Noe is associated with. This lead to the development of a paper: "Reformation or Retrogression: An Examination of the Claims and Methodology of the International Preterist Association." I read that paper at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November 2002.

- I took the interaction from that paper, made some corrections of fact and tightened up the argumentation and the revision will be printed as a journal article in Spring 2004 (*TMSJ*, 15:1 [Spring 2004] 39-58).

Additionally, one has to remember that “lag time” in producing printed works is often quite significant. Unless you are an immensely popular author, or the publisher has put a “rush” on publication to capitalize on some current event or popular fad, books take several years to get into print. For example, I wrote several articles for the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, which was published in 2000. However, I actually completed my research and submitted my articles for the publisher’s deadline in 1997.

The key issue to remember is that each stage of progression the concept become more focused and refined with interaction from peers and additional avenues of research.