

## **“The Search for Meaning: Information Seeking and Religious Conversion”**

### **ABSTRACT**

As evidenced by this conference, the intersections between religion and information are beginning to be recognized and explored. However, the literature on information seeking and religion has tended to focus on the information behavior of religious leaders (see Michels, 2009, 2012; Roland, 2007; Roland & Wicks, 2009; Wicks, 1999). Several papers from the previous two CSIR Conferences on Information and Religion focus on information seeking, use and evaluation, but the emphasis continues to be placed on examining these topics from an historical or clergy-centered perspective.

This paper offers an alternative approach to the study of information and religion by exploring information seeking practices in the context of religious conversion. Based on a search for peer-reviewed articles and conference proceedings in the major library and information science (LIS), religious studies, anthropology, and sociology databases, this paper includes what Marcia J. Bates has called a “rigorous systematic bibliography” (1976). I identify ways in which the concept of information seeking in the religious conversion process has been presented in the literature under subject terms, in combination with keyword searching. Using this method, I draw attention to the presence of information and information seeking in the existing literature on religious conversion.

By highlighting the ways in which these articles illustrate the concept of information seeking in the process of religious conversion, I develop a thorough definition of religious conversion and discuss its implications for our discipline’s understanding of “the social construction of religious knowledge” – the theme of this year’s Conference on Information and Religion. My findings build upon Jarkko Kari’s work on spiritual information phenomena (Kari 2011, 2009, 2007, 2001; Kari & Hartel 2007), and will further contribute to scholarly knowledge about information practices in religious contexts.

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### **Introduction**

In recent years, groundbreaking scholarship has shed light on the crossroads between information and religion. Studies of information behavior among religious leaders (see Michels, 2009, 2012; Roland, 2007; Roland & Wicks, 2009) have provided valuable insights about the ways in which clergy members seek and use information in writing sermons, making corporate decisions, and developing their faith. However, this narrow focus on the information practices of religious experts neglects to ask questions about information seeking among laypeople, particularly those who have experienced or are in the process of experiencing conversion. My purpose in this paper is to identify the ways in which the concept of information seeking – and related concepts such as information literacy and use – has been presented in literature on religious conversion, “that notoriously slippery concept” (Chua, 2012). By producing a “rigorous systematic bibliography” (Bates, 1976) of peer-

reviewed articles on information seeking and religious conversion, I will develop a working definition of religious conversion. In reviewing conceptualizations of religious conversion and identifying the presence of information seeking in the existing literature on this profound topic, we can expand our discipline's understanding of the ways in which religious knowledge and identities are socially constructed.

At this point, it is worth briefly describing Marcia J. Bates' (1976) proposal to translate the reference theory articulated in Patrick Wilson's "Two Kinds of Power: An Essay on Bibliographic Control" (Wilson, 1968) into a method that can be used by librarians to support users in their literature searches. Bates argues that a "systematic bibliography" (Bates, 1976) is "a list or sequence of descriptions of graphic materials on a given subject or area" (ibid.) which states its specifications with regard to domain and scope, selection principles, and organization. Bates describes what she calls a "rigorous systematic bibliography" (Bates, 1976), which makes clear to the person using the bibliography the types of information sources that are included and excluded – and in which "bibliographical territory" (Bates, 1976) the compiled sources were found; the rules by which sources that met scope requirements were selected for the bibliography; and the way in which the bibliography is arranged [i.e. by author, subject, publisher, etc.] and ordered [i.e. alphabetically, numerically, chronologically, etc.] (Bates, 1976).

After searching for variations of "information seeking" and "religious conversion" under subject terms, in combination with keyword searching, in the major library and information science (LIS), religious studies, anthropology, and sociology databases<sup>1</sup>, I sorted results by relevance, omitted false drops (e.g., for articles on cataloging systems conversions),

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA); Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA); Library Literature & Information Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson); Anthropology Plus; FRANCIS (Humanities & Social Sciences); JSTOR; Social Sciences Abstracts (H.W. Wilson); Sociological Abstracts (ProQuest); ATLA Religion Database; and ProQuest Religion.

and selected a sample of 38 articles. As reviewing an exhaustive set of search results would have been unsystematic and unduly time-consuming, this sample sufficiently captured a range of themes related to religious conversion and the informational, social, and cultural factors that contribute to constructing religious knowledge and identities in conversion contexts. The articles included in this paper's "rigorous systematic bibliography" – which is arranged by subject, sub-arranged by author, and ordered alphabetically (see Appendix A) – illuminated the following ten themes: (1) Motivating factors that influence individuals to undergo conversion; (2) Conversion as a radical, sudden, or dramatic transformation; (3) Conversion as a continuous, social process; (4) Conversion as a response to sociopolitical ideologies and cultural contexts; (5) Consistency with existing values and worldviews; (6) Religious identity as enacted performance; (7) Boundaries and borders; (8) Social connection and belonging; (9) Finding purpose and meaning through conversion; and (10) Information and the construction of religious identities. In order to develop a thorough definition of "religious conversion" and explain its implications for our discipline's understanding of the social construction of religious knowledge and identities, it is necessary to discuss each of the above themes in relation to the literature reviewed.

### **Theme #1: Why Do People Convert?**

One of the key factors credited with motivating individuals to convert to other religious traditions is the notion of "relative deprivation" (Baer, 1978, p. 279). In influential social studies of conversion conducted in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Glock, 1964), economic, social, moral, spiritual, and psychological deprivation has been described as the key impetus behind a person's decision to alter their religious identities. However, other motivating factors such as previous affiliation with, or membership in, a religious tradition or community; the

convert's parents' religious background; an interest in solving religious or spiritual problems; and relationships with significant others and community members who represent particular faith traditions (Baer, 1978) must also be acknowledged.

In addition to conditions of deprivation and close associations with members of religious communities, gravitation towards the aesthetic features of certain religious traditions (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012, p. 613); personal crises that raise spiritual and existential questions (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012, p. 613); and “insecure attachment relationships” (Schnitker, Porter, Emmons, & Barrett, 2012, p. 198; Zehnder, 2011) have been cited as possible factors motivating individuals to convert. Even one's life stage has been argued to play a role in influencing religious decisions, with adolescence being one of the most frequently cited stages of influence, given its transitional nature (see, e.g., Schnitker, Porter, Emmons, & Barrett, 2012). It is also possible that “gender specific rituals” (Zilm, 2008, p. 1) may attract individuals who seek stronger bonds with others who identify with the same gender, or who wish to explore their gender identities through religious participation, to join particular religious communities. Finally, “‘brainwashing’ or ‘coercive persuasion’” (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 178) must be recognized as a possible motivating factor, particularly in instances of new religious movements.

## **Theme #2: Conversion as a Radical Transformation**

A second theme generated by the literature reviewed is the conceptualization of conversion as a radical, sudden, and/or dramatic transformation – often, following a crisis situation or ongoing “emotional turmoil” (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998, p. 161). This idea is often attributed to William James' (1902) *Varieties of Religious Experience*, in which the author proposes that religious conversion involves a sudden, fundamental shift in worldview

and “accepted categories of meaning and sources of authority” (Hargrove, 1980, p. 22). In the Christian tradition, describing conversion as an individual’s reorientation of his/her spiritual identity or soul has early roots, going back to the *Confessions* of Augustine of Hippo (Jacobs, 2012, p. 27) and the biblical story of the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Mcdougall, 2009, p. 482).

However, the notion that conversion is essentially a phenomenon of “displacement” (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 170) is also reflected in research on conversion in religious contexts outside of the Christian tradition, as illustrated by Ali Köse’s (1994) study, “Post-Conversion Experiences of Native British Converts to Islam”. In this study, Köse defines religious conversion as “a definite break with one’s former identity... a radical change in one’s identity, beliefs, personality, ideas, behaviour, and values” (Köse, 1994, p. 195) and notes that conversion facilitated profound transformations in participants’ perspectives, systems of meaning, and daily practices (Köse, 1994, p. 196). While the participants in her study represented diverse conversion experiences, Karin van Nieuwkerk’s (2008) description of “Imaan’s” conversion narrative is also illustrative of a “radical break” (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 444); the “strong sense of rupture” (ibid.) from “Imaan’s” life before she converted to Islam (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 444) supports the idea that conversion may be experienced in a sudden and dramatic way.

### **Theme #3: Conversion as a Continuous Social Process**

In response to largely Christian-centric theories of conversion as a radical change that happens as a result of a direct revelation from a divine source, many contemporary scholars have argued that conversion is a continuous process, constructed through social interaction. Even earlier conversion scholars have encountered conversion narratives that focus on the

individual's active and ongoing process of learning about his/her newly adopted religion, in contrast with accounts that centre upon a critical "turning point" (Beckford, 1978, p. 258). More recently, scholars have attended to conversion as an ongoing journey to find answers to spiritual questions (Francis, 2011, p. 283), and as a transitional process of gradual change (Köse, 1994, p. 196), "rather than sudden and rapturous" (Chua, 2012, p. 515). As Luis Q. Lacar points out in his study of *Balik-Islam* in the Philippines, the process of "returning" (Lacar, 2001, p. 39) to Islam – that is, changing membership from Christianity to Islam (Lacar, 2001, p. 42) – is characterized by a gradual shift "from one perspective to another" (Lacar, 2001, p. 39). By moving away from earlier models that emphasize conversion as a sudden epiphany, conceptualizations of conversion as a continuous process offer useful frameworks for approaching studies of conversion outside of Christian contexts.

Furthermore, much contemporary research on conversion suggests that as a continuous process, conversion experiences are shaped by the social contexts in which they take place. Rather than a phenomenon that occurs merely between the individual and the divine, religious conversion involves an element of "action and response" (Sterk, 2010, p. 3) between new and established members of religious communities in a process of socialization. Such interactions may be mediated by conversation, material objects, or through the body (Swift, 2012). Whether mediated by formal religious education, informal discussions, material engagement, or embodied ritual, "conversion is a process that does not stop with the confession of faith" (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 442). Certainly, sensitivity to the social dimension of conversion is imperative for understanding religious conversion and the role that information seeking plays throughout this process.

**Theme #4: Conversion as a Response to Sociopolitical Ideologies and Cultural Contexts**

Another theme generated from the literature review is the notion that conversion does not only represent a change in an individual's religious identity, but can also act as a response to, or reflection of, specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts and the ideologies that pervade them. For example, accounts of conversion may be constructed not merely based on personal spiritual experiences, but as products of internalized doctrine (Beckford, 1978). In countries with official state religions, conversion can also serve as a strategy for claiming citizenship and national allegiance (Krael-Tovi, 2012). When religion is associated with national pride, conversion can help to establish a closer connection to others who share a particular national identity, history, and vision for the future (Borbieva, 2012).

Conversely, conversion can help individuals and groups to reject or redefine dominant discourses<sup>2</sup> (Bowen, 2010, p. 390; Lebra, 1970, p. 183). As one response to colonization, conversion has been interpreted as a way to assert power, appropriate new technologies, and gain access to different forms of literacy (Searing, 2003, p. 93). Even in the ancient world, conversion has been considered as a possible route to maintaining agency in situations of captivity (Sterk, 2010). Whether as a means by which individuals relate to their community or a reaction to hegemonic forces, conversion must be understood in the sociopolitical and cultural contexts in which it occurs.

**Theme #5: Consistency with Existing Values and Worldviews**

Of course, religious conversion does not necessarily need to react to unfamiliar political climates or social phenomena; newly adopted religious perspectives can also be consistent with one's existing values and worldviews. Some scholars have argued that in

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<sup>2</sup> My use of the term "discourse" aligns with the work of Michel Foucault, who conceptualized discourse as rhetorical practices and strategies that shape social relations and inform the ways in which knowledge is constructed. See Foucault (1972).

order for religious conversion to be effective, the prospective convert must have a favorable attitude toward the religious tradition that they are thinking of joining (Brock, 1962, p. 198). Others have suggested that individuals are inclined to convert to religious traditions that support their morals, beliefs, and ideas about the world (Cantoni, 2012, p. 502), and that can foster a continuity with “the old ways” (Chua, 2012, p. 511). In other words, religious conversion need not be conceptualized as exclusive; instead, it can be considered as a form of “adhesion,” of adding on to one’s existing religious life (Shepherd, 1979, p. 253). Liana Chua eloquently describes such approaches to religious conversion as “a positioning: as a simultaneously temporal, relational, and shifting set of configurations” (Chua, 2012, p. 522), rather than a purely individual process that happens over time.

As other aspects of identity are constructed through social life, religious identities of those who convert to other religions are also influenced by their previous exposure to religious traditions (Mcdougall, 2009, p. 480). The relational aspect of conversion has been acknowledged by scholars who write about the ways in which converts create their new identities with reference to what they already know about religious life (Köse, 1994, p. 198; Rogozen-Soltar, 2012, p. 619). Thus, one’s knowledge of one (or more) religious traditions can support the ways in which he/she learns about and understands his/her newly adopted religion.

### **Theme #6: Religious Identity as Enacted Performance**

One way to learn about a newly constructed religious identity is to perform certain actions. Often, new members of religious communities are expected to demonstrate their conversion publicly (Borbieva, 2012, p. 49), whether by professing their beliefs or taking a new name (Köse, 1994, p. 197). This type of performance has been referred to as “empirical



indicators of conversion” (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p. 171), which include “demonstration events, and rhetorical patterns” (ibid.). One common performance enacted by converts is sharing accounts or narratives about conversion experiences (Taylor, 1978). Wearing religious symbols (Vassenden & Andersson, 2011) is another way that converts can perform their new religious identities. These types of religious performances are closely connected with concepts from sociology such as impression management and performances of the self (see Goffman, 1959), and suggest that information about religious traditions can be accessed and managed not merely through documentary resources, but also through rituals and embodied symbols.

### **Theme #7: Boundaries and Borders**

In analyses of religious conversion, another common theme is the boundaries and borders that converts must navigate. Borders connote the margins between “self” and “other” (Jacobs, 2012, p. 29), and the frontiers that must be crossed (Jacobs, 2012, pp. 46-47) in the process of becoming a member of a religious community. Because boundaries can easily blur, they are often controlled by authority figures (Jacobs, 2012, pp. 46-47). Therefore, converts are subject to religious leaders and discourses that shape the ways in which they perform their new religious identities (ibid.). References to boundaries and borders in the literature reviewed indicate that religious conversion often involves a process of transitioning from a position of difference, to one of liminality (Turner, 1967, 1969; Gennep, 1960; Stoller, 2009; Jackson, 2009), and eventually, to member status. I anticipate that converts would search for information in different ways at various points throughout this transitional and transformative process.

**Theme #8: Social Connection and Belonging**

Given the prominence of border crossing and performance as overarching themes in much of the literature on religious conversion, it is not surprising that social connection and belonging have been described as crucial components of many conversion experiences. Some have argued that religious participation and decisions to convert are closely connected with the inherent “human need to share” (Gunton, 2011, p. 156). Conversion may offer an opportunity to become part of a community (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 435) of people who provide mutual caring and support (Hargrove, 1980, p. 23). Furthermore, conversion often entails a process of socialization, which requires neophytes to learn a new vocabulary, lifestyle, and value system through engagement in, and guidance from, the community (Köse, 1994, p. 200). By belonging to a religious community, converts can access ongoing affirmation and recognition of their identities from more established members (Köse, 1994, p. 201). In sixteenth century Germany, a territory’s adoption of Protestantism as an official religion was heavily influenced by the religious choices made by neighboring states (Cantoni, 2012); in our contemporary context, the impact of social networks on religious decisions must not be overlooked.

**Theme #9: Finding Purpose and Meaning Through Conversion**

Whether through belonging to a religious community, maintaining continuity with existing value systems, or overcoming a crisis, conversion has also been cited as an experience that can lead a person to find purpose and meaning in one’s life. Religious change has been credited as a way to clarify one’s vocation (Köse, 1994, p. 196) and to give life “a greater sense of purpose” (Borbieva, 2012, p. 53). With new discoveries of meaning, converts may find it necessary to modify aspects of their lifestyle accordingly (Köse, 1994, p. 200).

For instance, some converts may participate in daily rituals set out by their newly adopted faith tradition (Köse, 1994, p. 205), which produces significant changes in everyday routines and activities. The degree of involvement in, and commitment to, one's religious community varies among converts in diverse faith traditions, and this variation may be attributed to the extent to which one's conversion experience has evoked a new sense of life's meaning. Contemporary media and communications scholars have recognized the role of media in offering avenues to find spiritual meaning (Michels, 2012, p. 19). Presumably, access to religious information also plays a role in the discovery or construction of one's perceived purpose.

#### **Theme #10: Information and the Construction of Religious Identities**

Finally, intellectual engagement – and related concepts such as information seeking and literacy – as a factor in constructing religious identities is widely discussed in the literature. Outside of information studies, scholars have pointed to information practices such as the “intellectual search and comparative religious study” (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 436) that precede decisions to convert, involvement in publishing and translating religious articles and monographs (van Nieuwkerk, 2008, p. 444), and the shared language of myth and faith that converts must learn to become part of a religious community (Turner, 2008, p. 219). Others have investigated the role that folklore plays in proselytization as a way to canvass interest from potential converts, establish social connections between missionaries and potential converts, and persuade converts to undergo a process of re-socialization in joining an alternative religious community (Singer, 1980, p. 170).

Contemporary information scholars have identified information seeking and literacy practices outside of conversion contexts, which offer precedents for exploring the role of

information in conversion experiences. Lyndelle Gunton's (2011) analysis of "informed learning" as a strategy through which church leaders and laypeople use information to "grow faith, develop relationships, manage the church and respond to religious knowledge" (Gunton, 2011, p. 155) suggests the importance of information literacy in conversion experiences. Observations of the various types of information sources used in spiritual life (e.g., "text, audio, visual and digital forms" [Gunton, 2011, p. 157]; "informal and formal sources" [Lambert, 2010, p. 14]; print and online sources [Michels, 2009, p. 175]; "perceived experts and trustworthy friends and family" [Michels, 2012, p. 24]; religious leaders [Roland, 2011]; prayer [Michels, 2012]; icons [Walsh, 2012]) acknowledge that information scholars studying conversion contexts must be sensitive to the vast array of information sources that may contribute to the construction of new religious identities. The notion of "stopping behavior" (Lambert, 2010, p. 2)<sup>3</sup> also has intriguing implications for conceptualizing conversion as a continuous process.

### **Defining Religious Conversion**

Based on the themes generated from the literature reviewed, we can begin to develop a thorough definition of religious conversion. The definition put forth in this paper is a working one, subject to change and adaptation according to the nuanced and varied nature of conversion experiences. With that said, I propose that religious conversion is the process through which individuals decide to adhere to a particular faith community and its accompanying rituals and belief system. As expressed by the literature, this process may be experienced in a moment of sudden and dramatic revelation, resulting in a fundamental

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<sup>3</sup> As Joshua D. Lambert explains, "stopping behavior" refers to the phenomenon of terminating the information search process once sufficient information is gathered to complete activities such as sermon preparation and administrative tasks, or when the person thinks that additional time and effort spent on seeking information can no longer be justified (Lambert, 2010, p. 14).

spiritual transformation; conversely, conversion may be an ongoing, continuous experience in a person's life, shaped by the intellectual activities and social relations in which one is engaged, resulting in a spiritual transformation that remains attuned to one's existing worldview and values. Furthermore, religious conversion may be catalyzed by a number of factors, including spiritual, psychological, economic, or social deprivation; the religious backgrounds of parents, significant others, and close friends; personal crisis; transitional life stages; attraction to the aesthetic features of a religious tradition; and in some instances, coercion. Conversion can also serve as a means to connect with one's national or cultural community, or as a challenge to dominant sociopolitical discourse. Throughout the conversion experience, converts may perform their religious identities by taking new names, sharing conversion narratives, and wearing visible religious symbols. Finally, by helping to cross boundaries and foster social connection and belonging, religious conversion can offer a clearer sense of purpose and meaning.

### **Implications for Understanding “The Social Construction of Religious Knowledge”**

Before discussing this definition's implications for our understanding of “the social construction of religious knowledge”, I must acknowledge some of the groundbreaking work that has been conducted on “higher things in life” (Kari & Hartel, 2007) and spiritual information phenomena. In line with a contemporary movement towards a “positive information science” (Hartel, Kari, Stebbins & Bates, 2009), which is oriented towards the “positive features that make life worth living” (ibid.), Jarkko Kari and Jenna Hartel observe that information phenomena which happen in contexts outside of daily routines and occupational settings help to address existential questions by considering “what makes life worth living?” (Kari & Hartel, 2007, p. 1131). Moreover, these “higher things in life” (Kari &

Hartel, 2007) – pleasurable practices such as art, hobbies, and humor, and profound experiences such as wisdom and spirituality – are important elements for constructing identity, making life meaningful, and even improving professional performance (Kari & Hartel, 2007, p. 1133). Studies of higher things in life thus provide a better understanding of phenomena that transcend “normal” information behavior.

In an excellent review of what is currently known in information studies about the connections between information and spirituality, Kari suggests that information can: “be about the spiritual... be reckoned holy... be supposedly acquired by spiritual means” (Kari, 2007, p. 957), and “originate from a source considered as a spiritual entity” (ibid.). He also recognizes that information “actors” (Kari, 2007, p. 957) can be spiritual experts, communities, or individuals who experience spiritual development (ibid.). Finally, Kari notes that information processes can be: experienced as spiritual processes (Kari, 2007, p. 957), “influenced by a spiritually oriented environment” (Kari, 2007, p. 957), “allegedly affected by a spiritual agent” (ibid.), and carried out as a way to reflect upon and evaluate one’s beliefs (Kari, 2009, p. 460). Additionally, Kari argues that the intersections between information and spirituality not only encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, but also offer novel ideas about accessing information (e.g., through spoken word), expand upon our understanding of the nature of information, and illustrate the significance of spiritual information in people’s lives (Kari & Neelameghan, 2011, p. 3). By highlighting the many ways in which information and spirituality intersect, Kari offers a conceptual framework to explore information practices within contexts of personal spiritual development, including religious conversion.

Adding to this work, Daniel Roland and Don A. Wicks’ (2009) project on using a conversational model for qualitative research interviews explores the impact of faith on “information seeking and use behavior” (Roland & Wicks, 2009, p. 256) among clergy

members. Others have noted the dialogical relationship between information and spirituality, such as Anna Rose Stewart, who suggests that “the internet, rather than cultural blank slate, has come to be seen as a religious tool, shaped according to the ‘goals and desires of the social groups that use it’” (Stewart, 2011, p. 1205). These studies reflect the notion that religious knowledge is constructed through social interaction, and that sources of religious knowledge shape social relations and personal identities; in so doing, they serve as important precedents to frame future research on information practices in religious conversion contexts.

With these precedents in mind, I argue that the definition of religious conversion outlined above contributes to our understanding of how religious knowledge is socially constructed by illuminating the informational activities and social relations that contribute to a person’s spiritual transformation and transition into a new faith tradition or community. Much of the literature reviewed attends to the influence of social networks on a person’s decision to convert, and to the ways in which converts learn and perform their new identities through such information-rich practices as sharing stories with their community and changing their names. Despite earlier theories that conceptualized religious conversion as a sudden, dramatic epiphany, contemporary literature seems to support the idea that conversion does not happen in a vacuum, but in relation to the social and cultural contexts in which converts are situated. Certainly, reflecting on religious conversion and the information practices that are part of this process can expand our discipline’s understanding of “the social construction of religious knowledge.”

## **Conclusion**

While not all of the articles reviewed in this paper explicitly address information seeking, many of them direct attention to the informational aspects of religious conversion

experiences. By highlighting such information practices as studying different religious traditions (van Nieuwkerk, 2008), engaging in publishing and translation activities (van Nieuwkerk, 2008), and sharing myths (Turner, 2008) and folklore (Singer, 1980), the literature on conversion from religious studies, anthropology, and sociology suggests future research directions for information scholars. Furthermore, information scholars such as Kari, Lambert, David H. Michels, Roland, and Wicks have offered important precedents on information seeking and use in other religious contexts (e.g., sermon preparation by clergy) upon which to build studies of information practices among religious converts.

Currently, there is scarce literature on information seeking and use in religious conversion contexts. Rather than a drawback, I interpret this research gap as an exciting opportunity to contribute to the field of information studies, and to expand upon work that has been done on spiritual information phenomena. My aim in this paper was to develop a thorough, working definition of religious conversion and consider how this definition adds to our discipline's understanding of the ways in which religious knowledge is socially constructed. Continuing to explore information seeking among religious converts will encourage interdisciplinarity in information studies, and will attend to a more holistic picture of human experience.



## APPENDIX A: “Rigorous Systematic Bibliography”

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