



Center for the Study of Information and Religion

2014 Conference on Information and Religion
Paper / Poster Proposal

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Form with fields: Last Name of Primary Author (Grissom), First Name of Primary Author (Andrew), College, University or Other Affiliation (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), Professional Title (Student, Masters Candidate), City, State, Country (Memphis, TN, USA), Phone Number ((901) 299-5988), Email Address (agrisso2@utk.edu), Preferred Format (Paper, Poster).

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Proposal

Title of Presentation
Christian Values in Cyberspace: the Dissemination of Information Regarding Dating, Relationships, and Sex
Presentation Summary (approx. 100 words)
Risqué or sanctioned, ordained or not ordained by God – romance and sex are powerful ideas in the eyes of many Christian groups across North America. Each Christian sect maintains their own stance on how these human connections should take form. In the digital age, the process of informing laypeople of these values is complex and dynamic. This poster presents the research design for a study of the dissemination of information during attempts of Christian institutions to educate congregants on issues of dating, romantic relationships, and sex. The anticipated results from the study will include: the types of resources produced, the forms that they take, successes and failures of these attempts, and strategies for future improvements.
Research Problem and Research Methods (approx. 250 words)
This study design is informed by several research questions: What information practices do Christians use to educate laypeople about dating, romantic relationships and sex? Are institutions still advocating print resources and Sunday school lectures? Or do they take advantage of the digital landscape, adapting social media, blogs, databases, or other tools into their practices? This research project aims to get a sense of what information tools are popular and successful among Christian groups when disseminating this very critical, and often politicized, information. Survey questions will be distributed to clergy members and laypeople in at least two different Christian congregations in the Memphis area. The congregations will be chosen based on their differences in doctrine and values from other chosen groups – a comparison study of two or more very different groups will ultimately speak to the wide variety of information resources available to Christians across all sects. The surveys will address key concerns about the resources these churches produce and disseminate regarding dating, relationships, and sex: types or forms of resources, number of resources, accessibility, ease of use, scope, currency, and interactivity. Follow-up interviews with clergy members will further illuminate decisions taken to create and distribute these information resources.
Anticipated Results and Significance to Research at the Intersection of Religion and Information (approx. 250 words)
<p>It is anticipated that results from this study will provide evidence of an increased role of digital resources in disseminating information to congregant users. From church websites to blogs to social media websites, Christian groups are utilizing the digital landscape to project their ideas to the largest possible audience, targeting even beyond their current congregants to possible converts and new members. The topics of dating, romantic relationships, and sex within Christian environments are often geared particularly towards adolescents and young adults. Therefore, to compete with the marketplace of ideas and philosophies available to the millennial generation, churches are taking advantage of the digital landscape to disseminate their message in new and innovative ways.</p> <p>Literature addressing this area remains largely absent, particularly within scholarship interested in intersecting information studies and religion. Also, much existing scholarship seems to focus largely on information seeking behaviors of clergy members, rather than examining the behaviors and relationships of both clergy and laypeople within the larger framework of the communication chain. This research study attempts to close these gaps. Moreover, this project contributes to the Center for the Study of Information and Religion by touching on several key topics, such as: the use of social media to minister to youth, the information behaviors of clergy members, the dissemination of information by clergy members, the use of information technology to convey ideas and to provide services for congregants, and the uses of information by congregation members.</p>

Statement of Author's Credentials (approx. 100 words)

Andrew R. Grissom received a BA in religious studies from Rhodes College in 2012, completing a capstone paper exploring the masculine-feminine binary in Roman Mithraic iconography. He currently is a graduate student at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he intends to complete the Master of Science in Information Sciences degree in 2015. He also currently serves as the circulation supervisor at the Paul Barret, Jr. Library at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

Statement of Intent

By submitting this proposal, I indicate my intention to deliver my presentation at the 2014 Conference on Information and Religion if selected. *(Primary author should sign and date below.)*

Andrew R. Grissom	11/24/2013
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Signature *(may be typed)*

Date

Please provide information on additional authors/presenters in the boxes below.

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