CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY, RELIGION AND INFORMATION

An Interpretivist Investigation of Meaning-Making Narratives, Spiritual Seeking Concerns, and Librarian Attitudes

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PHD THESIS

Submitted: 31 May 2023

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank Prof Ian Ruthven for his care and guidance. The University of Strathclyde's Doctoral Fee-Only Scholarship made my PhD research possible, and I am immensely grateful for this too. Finally, I wish to thank Dominique and Rosalind for their kindness (I will get you the rent soon, I promise!)

Declaration

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

This thesis uses and builds upon the author's following previously published works:

Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022). Contemporary spiritual seeking: understanding information interactions in contemplation and spirituality. Journal of Documentation, (ahead-of-print).

Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022, September). Spiritual information and meaning-making: exploring personal narratives of residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre. In ISIC 2022 Information Seeking in Context Conference.

Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022). Spiritual needs and modern librarianship: a survey of practising librarians in a Western context. CoLIS11 Conceptions of Library and Information Science.

Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2023). A review of the literature on spirituality and religion in information research. (under submission).

Signed: Pranay Nangia

Date: 31 May 2023

Abstract

More than eight in ten people worldwide identify with a religious group. In addition, people often seek and use spiritual information despite having no formal religious status or affiliation. Spirituality is a prominent feature of several Western and Westernised information-based societies and cultures; however, people's everyday spiritual information interactions remain poorly understood in information and library science research. To this end, this thesis seeks to understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual but religiously unaffiliated contexts.

The thesis' original contributions lie in three novel interpretivistic investigations conducted to understand 1) the motivations and information interactions of fifteen spiritual retreat residents in a religiously unaffiliated context, 2) insights of thirteen contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers about spiritual seeking concerns & patterns, and 3) two hundred and eighty-one US and UK practising librarians' views and attitudes regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. In addition, the investigations are contextualised and supported by a novel synthesis of the literature on spirituality and religion in information research.

The investigations employ a qualitative sensibility and use secondary data (online video narratives), qualitative interviewing, and questionnaire techniques. Accordingly, the data (retreat residents' video narratives, teachers' and speakers' interview transcripts and librarians' questionnaire responses) are analysed thematically, and each investigation is presented as a chapter individually. A general discussion chapter then answers each investigation's research questions, relates them to existing information science understandings and offers a preliminary conceptualisation of relationships between contemplative spiritual practices and information.

Besides empirical contributions, this thesis demonstrates that secondary qualitative data analysis can be a helpful research approach during unexpected circumstances such as government-enforced physical distancing measures and worldwide pandemic-related lockdowns. Finally, this thesis helps facilitate transdisciplinary dialogue between contemplative studies and library and information science research and demonstrates that frameworks from other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and nursing, can help structure and enrich information behaviour investigations and potentially contribute to interdisciplinary discussions and collaboration.

Contents

0 Thesis Introduction

More than eight in ten people worldwide identify with a religious group (Pew Research Center, 2012). In addition, people often seek and use spiritual information despite having no formal religious status or affiliation. Spirituality[1] is a prominent feature of several Western and Westernised information-based societies and cultures; however, people's spiritual information interactions remain poorly understood in information and library science research. To this end, this thesis seeks to understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual but religiously unaffiliated contexts. The following sections explain this thesis' research context, aim, questions, structure and theoretical framework.

0.1 Research Context, Aim and Questions

The Pew Research Center's 2017 Changing Global Religious Landscape report highlights religious de-affiliation as a popular trend amongst those switching religious faith and signals that sixteen per cent of the global population currently has no religious affiliation. A complementary report, however, indicates that this group is relatively heterogeneous. In the US, many who are religiously unaffiliated identify as atheists or agnostic; however, some claim they are spiritual, not religious, and numerous others identify as both spiritual and religious but seldom attend services at churches, mosques or temples (Pew Research Center, 2017). A subsequent Pew report points out that a quarter of unaffiliated individuals regularly pray, contemplate or practice yoga or meditation, indicating that spiritual practices remain somewhat popular despite religious de-affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2018). These trends are also prevalent in European countries such as the UK, Germany, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands (Pew Research Center, 2012). Whilst scholars have examined the role of information in traditional religious contexts, such as in religious pilgrimage and bible-study sessions (e.g., Freeburg, 2011; Gorichanaz, 2016; Caidi, 2019), the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts has received little attention.

[1] In this thesis, spirituality refers to people's concern for ultimacy and transcendence and relates to a sense of grander life meaning or purpose. People may describe their spirituality as sacredness, aliveness and interconnectedness. In addition, some may link their spirituality with an established religion such as Christianity, Islam or Buddhism; emphasise a personal relationship with a God or a higher power; or express their spirituality through connections with art or nature. This thesis considers all such expressions as qualitatively synonymous. However, it focuses on religiously unaffiliated settings and interactions.

Here, Ter Borg (2004) helps point out that spirituality and religiosity in unaffiliated individuals might be 'dis-embedding' rather than disappearing (p. 108). To explain, Ter Borg stresses that besides official interactions, spiritual and religious activities nowadays can also present as alternative, sub-dogmatic, optional, or even implicitly religious. As a result, he believes that although official religiosity, which typically takes the form of overt institutional attendance, is more straightforwardly identifiable, many unaffiliated individuals' religiosity can take on less institutionalised forms upon religious de-affiliation (Ter Borg, 2004). Accordingly, Ter Borg believes that unaffiliated individuals also have spiritual and religious needs; however, he asserts that their needs might be disembedded from traditional religious structures and institutions. Like Ter Borg, Van der Veer (2009) believes that many contemporary forms of spirituality may exist primarily as alternatives to (institutionalised) religion. Therefore, many religiously unaffiliated people may still seek and use spiritual information but may not approach conventional religious organisations. In addition, several may engage in contemplative reading, silence, prayer and meditation but prefer to do so in secular settings rather than religious ones. Here, Pyati (2019) proposes that public libraries can naturally serve as spaces for spiritual information and resource provision outside formal religious institutions (p. 358). Moreover, Latham et al. (2020) assert that many spiritual practices can be distinctly informational regardless of people's spiritual or religious inclinations (p. 1012). Both frame their assertions using Duerr's (2004) Tree of Contemplative Practices, shown in Figure A (next page).

For Latham et al., the tree represents various spiritual practices organised into creative, generative, active, movement, stillness, ritual and relational branches, each with potential informational aspects that need exploration. Likewise, Pyati (2019) utilises Duerr's tree to clarify connections between contemplative practices and information and suggests that public libraries, in accordance with their existing roles, might also have a part in providing resources for patrons' spiritual and religious needs and expectations. I shall elaborate on the tree and its various branches later in Chapter 7: General Discussion; however, for now, it may suffice to explain that in Latham et al.'s assertion, it is possibly straightforward to see how certain tree activities, such as journaling, contemplative reading, storytelling and dialogue can be informational; however, the role of information in practices such as contemplative silence, centring and meditation requires careful investigation (Latham et al., 2020, p. 1012). Similarly, although Pyati feels public libraries can be contemplative and spiritual spaces, he underlines that we must first understand if practising librarians are comfortable making room for patrons' spiritual concerns (Pyati, 2019, p. 366).

Accordingly, this thesis aims to descriptively identify and interpretively understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. To do so, I present three interpretivistic investigations conducted to understand 1) the motivations and information interactions of fifteen contemplative spiritual retreat residents in a religiously unaffiliated context, 2) insights of thirteen contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers about people's spiritual seeking concerns & patterns, and 3) two hundred and eighty-one US and UK practising librarians' views and attitudes regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. In addition to these, I also present a narrative review to consolidate current understandings from the spirituality and religion-related information research literature.

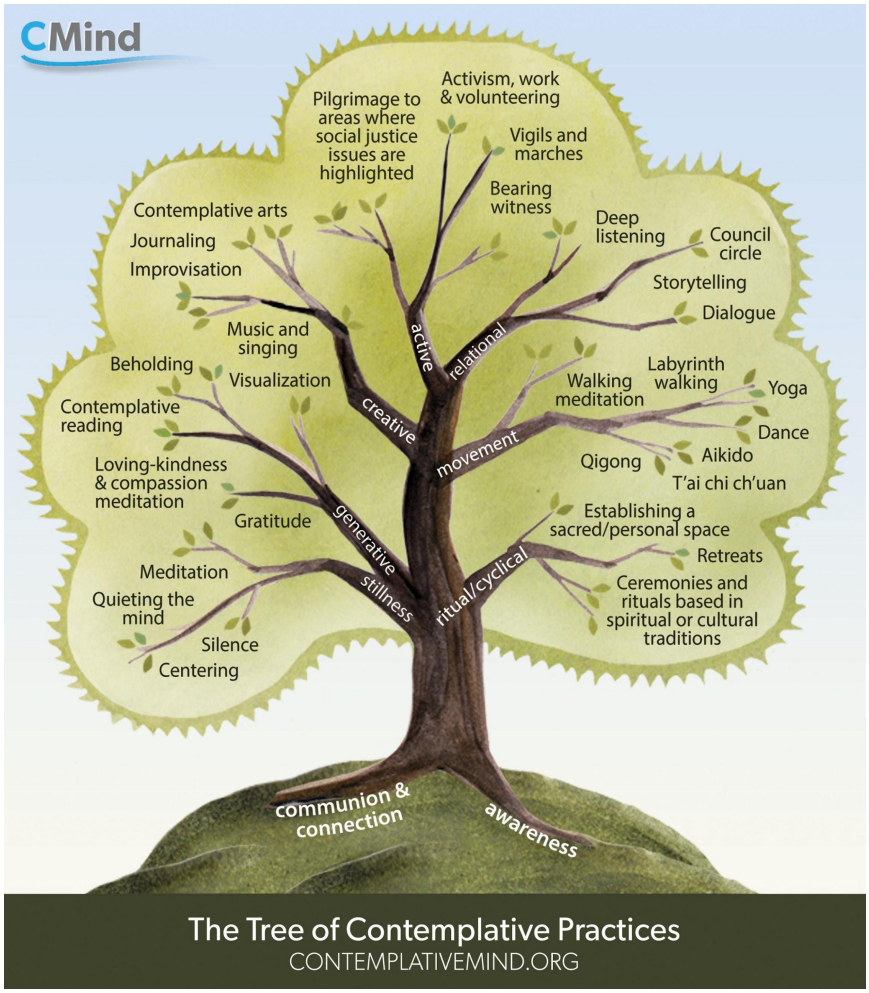


Fig. A: Tree of Contemplative Practices (Duerr, 2004)

The investigations and review relate to the following research questions:

- RQ1 How have scholars explored religion and spirituality within information research, and what are the gaps in the current literature?
- RQ2 What motivates people to engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?
- RQ3 What information phenomena surround residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre?
- RQ4 How do contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers explain spiritual seeking?
- RQ5 What are the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking?
- RQ6 What are librarians' views regarding spiritual needs?
- RQ7 What place (if any) do practising librarians feel spiritual needs have in modern library provision?

I shall explain these questions and how I formulated them in Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account. However, it may be helpful to state here that the investigations and review collectively help examine the role of information in contemporary spirituality by identifying information practices, behaviours, sources, concerns and outcomes; librarians' attitudes vis-a-vis spiritual needs and library provision; and current research gaps and challenges. The following section briefly outlines this thesis' theoretical framework.

0.2 Theoretical framework

This thesis exists as an intersection between information and communication studies and library research. However, it predominantly functions as information behaviour research conducted to understand people's spiritual and religious information concerns and interactions. As the previous section suggested, these interactions might include contemplative spiritual practices and information-seeking outside conventional religious contexts. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to help better understand contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated information interactions by taking into account various relevant perspectives, specifically those of spiritual individuals (information seekers), spiritual teachers and speakers (information facilitators) and librarians (information providers). To do so, I use Spirituality-Related Meaning-Making, Seekership, and a Spiritual Needs Questionnaire to analyse and interpret these perspectives and interactions more carefully. I shall introduce these lenses and tools in Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account. However, it may be worth noting here that this thesis rests upon the assertion that

spirituality for many people in contemporary society can be related to a search for answers among various religious sources without forming rigid commitments. These searches may involve questions regarding meaning and purpose or be related to various emotional, psychological or spiritual needs (Park, 2013; Sutcliffe, 2016; Galek et al., 2005). As a result, people may use multiple informational sources and strategies to aid their spiritual searches, and understanding these interactions might help inform the design of modern spiritual and religious information experiences. Notwithstanding this, information behaviour research is typically conducted for pure research (Wilson, 2020). Likewise, this thesis does not seek to make specific recommendations. Instead, it seeks to further information and library science understandings by contributing to wider research efforts in the spiritual and religious information domains. The following section briefly outlines the structure of the forthcoming chapters.

0.3 Thesis structure

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are organised into three parts:

Part One consists of Chapter 1: Introduction to Information Behaviour, Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research, and Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account. These chapters help introduce theoretical concepts such as information behaviour, practice, seeking, sources and outcomes used in later thesis parts; review and consolidate current religion and spirituality-related information science literature understandings; and help explain this thesis' research questions formulation, overarching methodology and approach.

Part Two consists of Chapter 4: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making, Chapter 5: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking, and Chapter 6: Spiritual Needs and Modern Librarianship. These chapters present three empirical investigations conducted to achieve the aim outlined in Section 0.1 earlier.

Finally, **Part Three** consists of Chapter 7: General Discussion and Chapter 8: Thesis Conclusion and Future Outlook. These chapters interpret and bring together insights from the investigations presented in Part Two, answer the research questions, discuss the findings' implications, and highlight original contributions and avenues for future research.

Parts of chapters 4, 5, and 6 have been previously published during the later stages of my PhD work. In addition, Chapter 2 is currently under submission for peer review. I briefly state how and where these publications appear in the following section.

0.4 Publications

This thesis uses and builds upon my following peer-reviewed publications:

1. Chapter 2 is under submission as Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2023). A review of the literature on spirituality and religion in information research. Library and Information Science Research.
2. Chapter 4 builds upon Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022, September). Spiritual information and meaning-making: exploring personal narratives of residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre. In ISIC 2022 Information Seeking in Context Conference.
3. Chapter 5 appears as Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022). Contemporary spiritual seeking: understanding information interactions in contemplation and spirituality. Journal of Documentation, (ahead-of-print).
4. Chapter 6 builds upon Nangia, P., & Ruthven, I. (2022). Spiritual needs and modern librarianship: a survey of practising librarians in a Western context. CoLIS11 Conceptions of Library and Information Science.

Part One

Introduction to Information Behaviour

A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research

General Methodology: A Reflexive Account

1 Introduction to Information Behaviour

Information behaviour[2] refers to human information-related activity *and* a research discipline within information and library science concerned with understanding people's informational dealings, especially how they contextually seek and use information. Besides information behaviour, information and library science includes other research disciplines such as library science and information retrieval (Hartel, 2021). In addition, information and library science can also include research about galleries, libraries, archives and museums (e.g. Given and McTavish, 2010). Parts of this thesis may pertain to some of these other disciplines and institutions; however, this thesis primarily functions as information behaviour research conducted to understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. Accordingly, this chapter briefly introduces some information behaviour concepts to contextualise subsequent chapters' theoretical references and discussions. I begin with a narrative overview of the discipline's historical origins and current position.

1.1 Historical Overview and Current Position

Bates (2010) explains that 'information behaviour is the currently preferred term used to describe the many ways in which human beings interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information' (p. 2074). She explains information behaviour as the *currently preferred* term because although 'behaviour' is widely used, it is contested. Moreover, there are alternatives, such as information practice and interaction (I shall discuss these later in section 1.2). Similarly, Wilson (2000) defines information behaviour as 'the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use' (p. 49). He extends this definition to include 'face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information, as in, for example, watching TV advertisements without any intention to act on the information given' (p. 49). As emphasised in Bates' explanation, a core aspect of information behaviour is information-seeking behaviour, i.e. the general ways people actively seek, passively consume and incidentally encounter information. Wilson's (1999) model helps conceptualise this by depicting information-seeking as a subset of broader human information behaviour (see Fig. B). In addition, Wilson (1999) models

[2] Information behaviour is also referred to as human information behaviour or information-related behaviour. This thesis uses the term information behaviour to refer to all such alternatives.

information-search behaviour, i.e. how people use information systems such as the World Wide Web, as a further subset of information-seeking behaviour (Wilson, 1999; Fig. B). This way, Wilson (2000) defines information-seeking behaviour as 'the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal' (p. 49) and information-search behaviour as 'the micro-level of behaviour employed by the searcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds' (p. 49). As with his definition of information behaviour, Wilson extends his information-seeking behaviour definition to explain that 'in the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library) or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web) and his search behaviour definition to explain that searching behaviour 'consists of all the interactions with the system, whether at the level of human-computer interaction (for example, the use of the mouse and clicks on links) or at the intellectual level (for example, adopting a Boolean search strategy or determining the criteria for deciding which of two books selected from adjacent places on a library shelf is most useful)' (Wilson, 2000, p. 49).

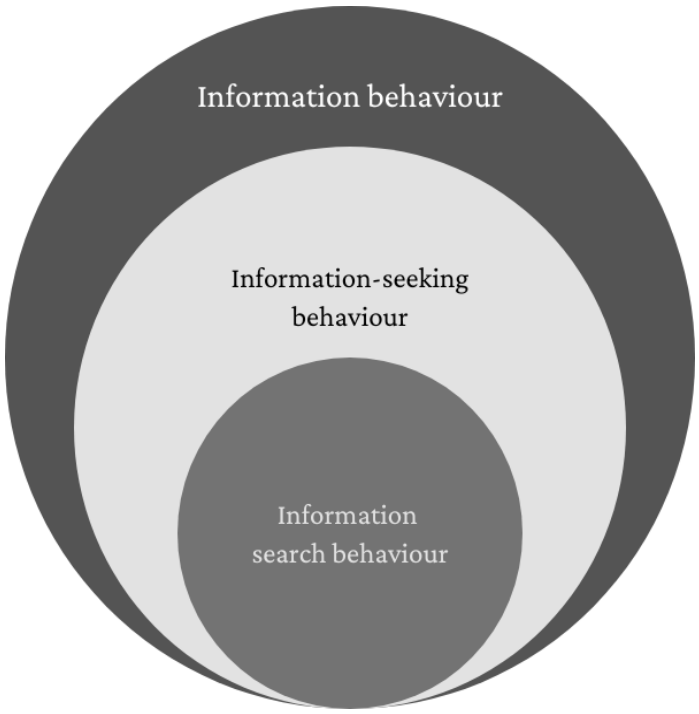


Figure B: Wilson's (1999) Nested Model

From a library science perspective, Ranganathan's (1931) Five Laws of Library Science alludes to information behaviour's possible origins[3] (Bates, 2010). The first three of his laws—books are for use, every reader his/her book and every book its reader—help build conceptual connections between readers and books and mark the beginnings of what later became the user-centred research perspective and is now called information behaviour in information and library science research (Hartel, 2021). Alternatively, the origins of information behaviour may be traced to the 1970s when the term began to be widely used to refer to research classed as user studies; information needs and use studies and communication behaviour studies (Bawden and Robinson, 2022). In either case, the origins of information behaviour research are marked by a shift in focus from physical information systems to people/users and their engagements with information in the form of publications or electronic content. Case (2014) identifies three historical phases in information behaviour research: studies of the use of library collections, 1836–1935; studies of the use of documents and resources, 1936–58; and studies of the use of information broadly construed, regardless of the source, 1959–present (Bawden and Robinson, 2022). Similarly, through a selective literature review, Hartel (2019) identifies seven information and library science turns that help explain information behaviour's theoretical and methodological evolutions beginning in the 1980s. These are the cognitive turn, affective turn, neo-documentary turn, socio-cognitive turn, everyday life turn, social constructionist turn and embodied turn (Hartel, 2019). In the following subsections, I briefly elaborate on some of these historical phases and turns and use them to outline my discussions of various information behaviour concepts and theories.

1.1.1 The Cognitive Turn in Information Behaviour

The cognitive turn in information behaviour research can be viewed as a movement away from the 1950 physical paradigm in information and library science (Hartel, 2019). A defining characteristic of the physical paradigm was the focus on building better information search & retrieval systems through experimental examinations of test collections and evaluations of various index languages or search algorithm performance (Ellis, 1992). In contrast, the cognitive viewpoint in the 1980s asserted that proper information search and retrieval systems should reflect the *user's* thinking patterns. This viewpoint, therefore, pushed for researchers to focus on users as their primary object of inquiry. Here, Dervin and Nilan (1986) highlighted calls from several scholars for a 'user-centred'

[3] Ranganathan's (1931) five laws: 1) Books are for use. 2) Every person his or her book. 3) Every book its reader. 4) Save the time of the reader. 5) A library is a growing organism.

paradigm as an alternative to the earlier systems-centred one and emphasised a subjective research approach that considered individual users' perspectives. An example of this approach was Belkin's hypothesis of a user's anomalous state of knowledge.

In the early 1980s, Belkin pointed out that information science and information retrieval researchers in the 1950s and 60s were primarily concerned with the effective and efficient transference of information between information generators and users, which fundamentally misunderstood human inclinations to acquire knowledge directly (or instinctively) from their physical environments (Belkin, 1980, p. 134). Accordingly, Belkin believed that the purpose of an information system was to help people solve problems naturalistically rather than dealing with problems in a technical question-answer manner. His paper explained that prevailing information behaviour models conceptualised users as individuals who recognised an information need (I will discuss this more in section 1.3) and presented it to an information search & retrieval system, hoping it would help satisfy that need. However, it argued that such conceptualisations did not reflect how users cognitively communicated their informational desires. According to Belkin (1980), a user typically communicated for some reason and to some audience an aspect of his/her state of knowledge, which was modified by beliefs, intentions, values and context, amended further by linguistic and pragmatic rules, and was finally presented as text which the user believed would be part of an information search and retrieval system's records (p. 135). This way, a user decided typically to investigate or use a part of his/her state of knowledge but, on consideration, realised that there was an anomaly in that state of knowledge. Furthermore, this anomaly changed based on the user's evaluations of the search & retrieval systems' outputs (p. 135). Thus in Belkin's view (and the cognitive viewpoint in general), users did not have static information needs but rather dynamic and changing anomalous states of knowledge. This view was also reflected in other naturalistic information behaviour schemas such as Taylor (1968), Wersig (1971) and Kochen (1975) (Belkin, 1980, p. 136) and marked the beginnings of the user-centred paradigm in which information behaviour research was thereafter situated.

Another defining theory from the 1980s cognitive viewpoint was Dervin's Sense-Making. Like Belkin, Dervin did not differentiate between information and knowledge and characterised human information-related activities as sensemaking and unmaking. Her theory, Sense-Making[4], conceptualised information as a verb and posited sensemaking and unmaking as an individual's

[4] Capitalised here to differentiate it from the word's lay usage

lifelong mandate or condition (Dervin, 1998, p. 36). Accordingly, Dervin asserted that humans moved within a naturally *gappy* lifeworld wherein a set of situations, gaps and uses characterised their interactions. Situations here meant the context in which the individuals made and unmade sense. Gaps were seen as needs that required bridging. Moreover, uses denoted that towards which individuals directed their newly made or unmade sense (Dervin, 1983). Sense-Making consequently advocated blending objective quantitative understandings with subjective understandings of users' information behaviours using neutral questioning and micro-moment timeline interview techniques. Therefore, Belkin's anomalous state of knowledge, Dervin's Sense-Making and other proponents of the cognitive viewpoint helped shift information and library science research from its traditional stronghold in information retrieval and bibliometrics to the social-scientific study of human information behaviours (Hartel, 2021).

1.1.2 The Affective Turn in Information Behaviour

Following this, in a seminal study published in the late 1980s, Mellon explored university students' feelings about using an academic library space for research (Mellon, 1986). To do so, she analysed numerous students' reflective writing assignments to understand three questions: What were students' experiences of using the library to find information for their research paper? How did students feel about the library and their ability to use it? And did these feelings change over the semester? Through her study, Mellon discovered that students' often described their library experiences as scary, overpowering and confusing and most dreaded using a library space in general (Mellon 1986). This study was significant for two reasons. First, it used qualitative methods (grounded theory) for conducting library research, which at the time was relatively uncommon, and second, it focused on the emotional dimensions of people's information behaviours. The latter was especially significant as it marked an affective turn in information and library science research (Hartel, 2019).

Soon after, Kuhltau (1988; 1991) similarly examined university students' information behaviours as they completed a research assignment and emphasised that a student's typical information-search process had cognitive *and* affective dimensions. Her (1988) paper highlighted students' feelings in six stages: uncertainty, optimism, confusion/frustration, clarity, confidence, relief and satisfaction (Kuhltau, 1988). This, again, was novel and significant as prevailing information behaviour theories at the time did not consider the affective dimensions of people's information-seeking tasks and assignments. Another significant piece of research during this time was Chatman's (1996)

information poverty research. While Mellon's and Kuhltau's findings were born from qualitative studies in academic contexts, Chatman conducted ethnographies that revealed affective dimensions in marginalised populations' information worlds and struck poignant, compassionate chords (Hartel, 2019). Chatman (1996) researched varied groups' information behaviours, such as those of retired elderly women, female prisoners and janitors, and highlighted deception, risk-taking, secrecy and situational relevance behaviours that arose alongside information poverty within bounded and marginalised groups. These studies helped move information behaviour into more humanistic contexts and served as foundations for using qualitative and ethnographic methods for conducting information-related research.

1.1.3 The Everyday Life Turn in Information Behaviour

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several scholars signalled that a significant category of people's information behaviours that had been neglected related to activities outside work-like and institutional environments (e.g., Savolainen, 1995; Hector, 2001). Here Savolainen's landmark (1995) article Everyday Life Information Seeking: Approaching Information Seeking in the Context of Way of Life introduced the ELIS acronym and proposed Bourdieu's (1984) theory of habitus and its associated 'way of life' concept to explain and model daily life information practices and problems (Hartel, 2019).

Savolainen (1995) characterised everyday life information seeking as attempting to acquire 'various informational (both cognitive and expressive) elements … to orient [oneself] in daily life or to solve problems not directly connected with the performance of occupational tasks' (p. 267). He explained that such problems could be associated with various areas of everyday life, such as consumption and health care (Savolainen 1995). However, he clarified that 'everyday life information seeking' did not position these problems as dramatically different from work-related information problems but that both contexts had distinct information behaviours, and ELIS provided a means of conceptually organising non-work behaviours which were hitherto underexplored (p. 266). Over the years, Savolainen refined his original (1995) model twice; however, I restrict my discussion here to the original one as my intention in this chapter is to provide brief contextual background.

Savolainen's 1995 ELIS model posited that everyday life information seeking typically occurred within projects and problems associated with keeping one's life in order or maintaining one's mastery of life. The model viewed this information-seeking as necessary because it asserted that

daily life problems interfered with a person's way of life or the usual order of things (p. 268). The 1995 model, therefore, considered ELIS as problem-solving behaviour mediated by personal values, material capital, social capital, cultural capital and situational context (p. 268). This was significant as when compared with the cognitive viewpoint, Savolainen's ELIS featured interacting sociocultural and personal dimensions and linked information science to habitus, social phenomenology and practice theory (Hartel, 2021). Furthermore, it helped shift information behaviour's analytical lens from institutional and work-based contexts to everyday life's diverse and intimate spaces. The 'everyday life' turn and Savolainen's conceptualisation of ELIS have ever since provided a theoretical foundation for information behaviour studies in varied contexts, including religion, the paranormal, the hobby of gourmet cooking, wedding planning and the pleasurable & profound (Dankasa, 2015; Kari 2009; Hartel, 2007; McKenzie and Davies, 2010; Kari and Hartel, 2007). In addition, the turn has also helped drive research into newer and emerging internet-based contexts such as online gaming, YouTube and social media (Hartel, 2019).

1.1.4 The Embodied Turn in Information Behaviour

More recently, in the 2010s, information behaviour research expanded to include unconventional types of information, such as corporeal experience and embodied know-how. This turn emerged out of research such as Lloyd's (2007; 2009) studies into firefighters and ambulance drivers and Olsson's (2016; 2010a, 2010b) studies of archaeologists and theatre professionals (Hartel, 2019). Lloyd's (2007) investigation into firefighters' behaviours intersected with information literacy research to highlight shortcomings in prevailing information literacy (and, by extension, information behaviour) conceptualisations. Her (2007) paper indicated that information literacy had been primarily examined in educational contexts and argued that such contexts did not represent activities like firefighting, which involved literacy that was socially and physically constructed rather than textual alone (p. 181). To explain, relying on Weber and Johnston's (2000) review, Lloyd highlighted that information literacy education typically discussed aspects such as identifying an information need; informed choice of information sources; selecting, evaluating, and synthesising information; and ethical use and presentation (p. 182). However, as an alternative, Lloyd (2007) posited information literacy as 'a way of knowing about an information landscape through embodiment within context' (p. 183). She constructed her argument by relying on findings from her research which indicated that large portions of firefighter training involved developing a 'fire sense' through on-the-job learning in real-life encounters. Accordingly, Lloyd (2007) explained

that firefighters typically built such fire senses by using their bodies as a source of sensory information (p. 188).

Similarly, Olsson's (2016) study investigated how archaeologists made sense of their artefacts and excavation sites and emphasised that their practices were social and embodied (p. 410). For context, Olsson (2016) highlighted that 'before an artefact could be displayed in a museum or even classified for inclusion in an archaeological repository, it must first be unearthed *and* identified as an artefact' (p. 411, emphasis mine). However, he explained that archaeologists sometimes found this identification process difficult due to a lack of literature or codified texts when working with artefacts from historic, non-literacy-based cultures (Olsson, 2016). In these cases, Olsson's (2016) study highlighted that archaeologists often relied upon haptic analyses to make sense by searching for features such as temperature, movement and texture (p. 413). Therefore, Lloyd's and Olsson's works helped move contemporary information behaviour research logically from 'mind to heart to body' (Hartel, 2019). Moreover, recent works within the embodied turn have begun to spotlight the role of embodied information in contexts such as ultrarunning, diabetes management and religious conversion, opening up avenues for researching activities outside the typical realm of information-related research (Cox et al., 2018; Bates, 2018; Gorichanaz, 2018; Jean et al., 2018; Guzik, 2018). According to Case and Given (2016), this emerging body of information behaviour focuses more on seekers and their contexts and less on information sources and channels; however, the latter are still investigated in some form.

Having briefly introduced information behaviour's origins, evolution and current position, I shall present some concepts and terms commonly used by information behaviour scholars in the following sections. This is necessary as many of these terms will be used in subsequent chapters, and a succinct overview at this stage may help provide essential background for contextualising further discussions. Accordingly, the next section provides an overview of two high-level information-related research conceptualisations—information behaviour and practice— using Savolainen's (2007) idea of 'umbrella' terms. Following this, I shall discuss information needs, sources, seeking, use and outcomes in the subsequent sections.

1.2 Umbrella Concepts: Behaviour and Practice

As noted in section 1.1, there are alternatives to information behaviour. Here, Savolainen (2007) explains that information behaviour is currently the dominating umbrella concept; however,

information practice is a critical alternative (p. 109). According to Savolainen (2007), information behaviour primarily draws on the cognitive viewpoint (introduced in section 1.1.1), whereas ideas of social constructionism inspire information practice. Accordingly, he believes it is important to clarify these underlying influences as both behaviour and practice may be considered categories that suggest different normative viewpoints of interpreting related terms such as information needs and seeking (discussed later in 1.3 and 1.4). Bawden and Robinson (2022) similarly indicate that the difference between behaviour and practice is one of emphasis and perspective. Like Savolainen, they, too, highlight that behaviour derives from a psychological stance, whereas practice comes from sociology.

For Bawden and Robinson, behaviour reflects an interest in how and what individuals think and know, what information needs they have, and what they do as a result, whereas practice deals with how information activities are embedded in wider group practices, cultural factors and habitual characteristics (Bawden and Robinson, 2022). This thesis aims to descriptively identify and interpretively understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts (see section 0.1 of the Thesis Introduction). Accordingly, I seek to examine all possible phenomena of interest to information and library science in my investigations and, taking their respective connotations into account, use the terms behaviour and practice in subsequent chapters as contextually appropriate. To explain, I use 'behaviour' when referring to individual cognitive sensemaking, 'practice' when referring to collective, communal and regular aspects and 'interaction' when referring to human informational activity unspecifically. I explain my rationalisations for this in the following subsections.

1.2.1 Behaviour as Individual Cognitive Sensemaking in Parts Two and Three

Bawden and Robinson (2022) explain that information behaviour research was originally limited to interactions with formal information sources and systems; however, it now more broadly concerns the totality of human behaviour concerning information sources and channels (see 1.1 for precise definitions). In doing so, 'behaviour' generally signals a cognitive sensibility that connects information-seeking activities with psychological and physiological needs associated with a lack of information (Savolainen, 2007). The cognitive turn helped shift needs from static to dynamic ones; however, the fundamental understanding of needs as individually constructed motivations persisted. For example, Wilson (1981) proposed that information-seeking behaviour (which he modelled as a subset of general information behaviour) was typically initiated by recognising needs

for which the user identified various information-seeking paths. Similarly, Krikelas (1983) characterised information-seeking behaviour as an activity intended to satisfy an individual's perceived need (p. 6). I shall elaborate on the concept of information needs in section 1.3; however, it may be sufficient to explain here that from these examples, 'behaviour' effectively relates to human information-seeking activity motivated by individual psychological and physiological needs, goals or uncertainties (Savolainen, 2007). Accordingly, this thesis uses behaviour when referring to psychologically and physiologically driven information interactions in Parts Two and Three of this thesis. In addition, it uses interaction when referring to information-related activities unspecifically.

1.2.2 Practice as Collective and Routine Activity in Parts Two and Three

In contrast to behaviour, which emerged alongside the 70s and 80s user-centred paradigm, 'practice' began to be noticeably used only in the early 2000s and represents a more sociologically and contextually oriented research perspective (Savolainen, 2007). Here, Touminen, Talja and Savolainen (2005) help point out that information practice implies the view that information-seeking activities and processes are socially and dialogically constituted rather than through individual actors' ideas and motivations (p. 328). In addition, Savolainen (2007) emphasises that repeated and regular actions are key practice characteristics (p. 120). Accordingly, practice is commonly used to denote institutionalised socially constructed workplace interactions and habitual, instinctive or routine daily life ones. McKenzie's (2003) Model of Information Practices is a typical example of this. In her paper, McKenzie (2003) uses the terminology of practice when referring to instinctual everyday life information-seeking activities such as identifying helpful sources, being given information without actively seeking it, planning encounters with potential sources and searching by proxy (p. 23). Similarly, Veinot's (2007) The Eyes of the Power Company uses practice to refer to the information activities of an underground vault inspector engaged in routine, rule-based maintenance duties. Therefore, information practice emphasises the role of contextual factors in information seeking, sharing and use compared with the individualist and decontextualised approaches emphasised in information behaviour (Savolainen, 2007, p. 121). I shall discuss information seeking, sharing, use and outcomes in sections 1.4 and 1.5. Here, I clarify that according to the general usage of practice presented above, I employ the terminology of practice when referring to collective and routine informational activities in Parts Two and Three of

this thesis. In addition, like before, I use interaction when referring to information-related activities unspecifically.

1.3 Information Needs

As discussed in previous sections, information need(s) is a term information behaviour scholars commonly use when referring to people's information-seeking concerns and motivations. However, like behaviour, the term need is also controversial. For example, Cole (2015) characterises information need as an internal state that motivates an individual to commence an information search (p. 4117). In contrast, Nicholas (2003) uses the term to objectively refer to information that individuals 'ought to have to do their job, solve a problem or pursue a hobby or interest' (p. #[5]). Notwithstanding different conceptualisations, 'information needs' are integral to many information behaviour theories and models (Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie, 2005). Moreover, identifying and understanding people's information needs is a particular focus for many information behaviour investigations (e.g., Prabha et al., 2007). Accordingly, this thesis examines people's motivations and concerns in contemporary spiritual or religiously unaffiliated contexts in Parts Two and Three. However, it does not use the term information need but refers more generally to questions or concerns. This is because information need is variously conceptualised in information behaviour (Cole, 2012). Accordingly, I am unsure of its appropriateness and do not want to use it unreflexively without conducting a context-centred exploration. I briefly highlight typical information-need conceptualisations to explain my hesitation.

When discussing information needs, Taylor's (1962; 1968) descriptions of people's visceral, conscious, formalised and compromised needs are foundational for making sense of this literature. In The Process of Asking Questions, Taylor (1962) examined how and why people asked questions at library reference desks and described people's needs in visceral, conscious, formalised and compromised stages or levels. Taylor (1962) described the first stage as a 'vague dissatisfaction… [that was] probably inexpressible in linguistic terms' (p. 392). The next stage he described as a conscious mental description of a need through an 'ambiguous and rambling statement' (p. 392). At the formalised stage, according to Taylor, an inquirer could form a rationalised statement of his/her need but did not know if the need could be answered in those terms (p. 392). In the fourth

[5] I referenced an electronic/HTML version of this resource which did not include page numbers. Please consider this footnote applicable to all such (p. #) notations in forthcoming chapters.

stage—the compromised need— he/she finally expressed the need in terms of something that an information system or a person could retrieve (p. 392). This way, Taylor explained that people's needs or questions could be described in four stages or levels. However, only the compromised, formalised, and possibly conscious needs were available to a librarian or information system and the visceral need typically remained with the individual (Taylor, 1962). Accordingly, Taylor believed that people's final compromised needs did not authentically represent their initial concerns but only that which the system or librarian could retrieve for them. Therefore, on Taylor's account, an 'information need' might be conceptually closer to a system/librarian's need than the individual in question. Regardless, the idea that information needs motivate information-seeking behaviours is common to several information behaviour theories and models (Ruthven, 2019). Ruthven (2019) helps categorise typical hypotheses of information needs as problematic situations, emotional uncertainty, cognitive uncertainty and embodied sensation. Here, Dervin's (1983) situation-gap-use model and Belkin's (1980) anomalous state of knowledge (discussed in 1.1.1) serve as examples of needs as problematic situation conceptualisations. In addition, Kuhltau's (1991) Information Search Process (see section 1.1.2) uses a combination of thoughts and feelings to explain how students express information needs. Moreover, Cox, Griffin and Hartel's (2017) attempt at adapting various needs-based models to include embodied know-how exemplifies the information need as embodied sensation conception. The problem, however, as Cole (2012) notes, is that an information need is more abstract than a traditional need such as food, water or shelter (p. vii). Moreover, when discussing information needs, scholars often conglomerate them with uses, demands and wants (Nicholas, 2003, p. #; Wilson, 2006, p. 661). Wilson explains that such conglomerations partly result from failing to identify the context within which information needs investigations are carried out and suggests removing the term information needs from our professional vocabulary entirely (Wilson, 2006). Thus, having discussed various information-need conceptualisations and opinions from the literature, I believe that speaking in terms of people's information needs may be helpful for decision-making in established and well-understood domains and contexts; however, since this thesis aims to understand a still underexplored contemporary spiritual or religiously unaffiliated domain, categorising motivations or concerns as information needs might be premature. I, therefore, use the more generally accepted terms— questions or concerns when discussing contemporary spiritual-seeking motivations in Parts Two and Three of this thesis.

1.4 Information Seeking, Sources, and Outcomes

Unlike behaviour and needs, 'information seeking' is an uncontested term in information behaviour research and refers to the purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal (Wilson, 2000). Wilson's (1999) nested model (shown in Fig. B, section 1.1 earlier) positions information-seeking as a subset of overall information behaviour. Accordingly, besides seeking, information behaviour can also include information creating, sharing, using, misusing, destroying, etc.; However, seeking is central to most information behaviour theories and investigations (Case and Given, 2016). A further subset of information-seeking is information-searching, i.e., how people interact with various physical and technical search systems. However, I shall not focus on such detail in this thesis. Instead, I shall keep to Wilson's (1999) nested model's wider information behaviour and information-seeking levels in my context-centred investigations. In doing so, I shall also examine information sources and outcomes. Simply put, an information source can be a kind of literature, a colleague, a project documentation, an object or an event (Byström and Pharo, 2019). For example, in a workplace context, Byström and Pharo (2019) discuss various information sources such as handbooks, procedures, memoranda, a newsletter, a unit supervisor, other team members, clients, etc. Moreover, they explain that in addition to documents and records, individual people – especially peers but also other people involved in various roles – and groups or networks of people can be information sources in themselves (p. #). Accordingly, I shall identify and examine the role of information sources, including people and documentary sources, in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts in Parts Two and Three of this thesis. Additionally, I shall discuss information outcomes. These are closely linked to information use; however, compared with needs and seeking, they are rarely investigated or discussed in information behaviour research (Case and O'Connor, 2016). Here, Kari (2007a) defines an outcome as that which ensues from or 'comes out' of being informed. Moreover, Dervin's Sense-Making (discussed in 1.1.1) characterises outcomes as helps, hindrances, functions, dysfunctions, consequences, impacts, effects and future horizons arising from information interactions (Dervin et al., 2003). Accordingly, and in sum, I shall focus on information interactions, behaviours, practices, sources and outcomes when identifying the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts in subsequent thesis parts. However, before doing so, I review and consolidate understandings from the current religion and spirituality-related information research in the next chapter.

2 A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research

In the thesis introduction, I emphasised that people may seek and use spiritual information in *and* outside religiously affiliated contexts. Accordingly, contemporary spiritual and religious interactions can range from unaffiliated spiritualities that might reject traditional religious narratives to those spread across several ideologies and compatible with memberships of various formal and informal institutions. However, if and how this diversity is reflected in information research remains to be examined. To this end, this chapter presents a narrative review of how scholars have explored spirituality and religion in information research to analyse current understandings, identify gaps and indicate research areas.

2.1 Background

Historically, religion and spirituality were seen as convergent concepts; however, popular interpretations sometimes relate spirituality with personal values and beliefs rather than religious grand narratives (Van der Veer, 2009). In addition, contemporary attitudes towards religion and spirituality can vary considerably as people's inclinations present themselves in various ways: the religious but not spiritual, the religious and spiritual, the spiritual but not religious and neither spiritual nor religious (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to sociologists, this diversification can be attributed to late nineteenth-century liberalism, socialism, globalisation, and scientific advancements followed by widespread searches for freedom from institutionalised religion and spiritualities not bound to specific traditions (Van der Veer, 2009; Borowick, 2011).

Van der Veer (2009) explains that modern spiritual change occurred alongside secularisation in late nineteenth-century Euro-American society. Scientific progress during this time, coupled with increasing separation between church and state, resulted in the growth of secularism and increased searches for rational means of satisfying human needs (Van Niekerk, 2018). Alongside this, contemporary forms of spirituality emerged as an alternative to organised religion. These new spiritualities were defined by a 'thoroughgoing political, economic and cultural integration of the world' (Van der Veer, 2009, p. 1098) and, in the West, presented as various attempts seeking to dissociate from established church Christianity. Van der Veer (2009) describes this period as a combination of socialist radicalism, secularism and spirituality, characterised by attempts to isolate crux elements of spirituality in existing religious traditions (e.g., the formation of the Theosophical

Society and the World Parliament of Religions). These attempts involved the creation of new philosophical and linguistic tools for translating existing traditions into a set of 'world' religions that could be treated relatively equally. Chief among these was Muller's Sacred Books of the East series (1879-1910), which helped make the religious traditions of India and China more relatable to the West and contributed to the growth of spirituality as a concept independent of religious institutions and their authoritative boundaries (Van der Veer, 2009).

Further changes came in the 1960s and 1970s, as baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) were seen as a generation disillusioned by institutionalised religion and more likely to relate to the sacred privately (Roof, 1993; 2001). According to Roof (1993), religious values were no longer handed down from parents to children or passively accepted during this period. Instead, baby boomers 'value[d] experience over beliefs, distrust[ed] institutions and leaders, stress[ed] fulfilment yet yearn[ed] for community, and [were] fluid in their allegiances' (Roof, 1993, p. 8). Thus, in Roof's (1993) view, the 1970s was a time of charismatic spiritual revival in the United States, following which an array of New Age and Eastern spiritualities marked the 1980s. Sutcliffe (2003) regarded these alternative spiritualities as explorations in 'communal and cooperative living, reading 'mystical' texts, practising meditation, and using occult divination and personal growth techniques' (p. 2). However, unlike Roof (1993; 2001), who believed this to be a sign of collective movement away from religious affiliation in America, Sutcliffe (2003) recalled these as 'a diffuse collectivity of individuals, networks, societies and small groups … that amounted to a loose culture of 'alternative' spirituality' in Europe (p. 3, emphasis original).

Roof's (1993; 2001) conclusions were based on a subsample of baby boomers (surveyed in four American states, California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ohio) who claimed they were not religious but considered themselves spiritual. This was repeated in a 1999 Gallup Organisation survey in which 30% (of 1037 surveyed US adults) described their beliefs as spiritual but not religious (Princeton Religion Research Center, 2000). These (and subsequent– Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Marler et al., 2002; Roof, 2000; Scott, 2001) studies relayed a growing sense of divergence between religious and spiritual attitudes in the United States (although Marler and Hadaway (2002) pointed out that respondents typically identified as both religious and spiritual in studies allowing for more than one option). In Western Europe, the divergence appeared to be more dramatic (Davie, 2000). Two European Value Studies conducted in 1981 and 1999 pointed to an overall decline in religious orthodoxy, ritual participation and institutional attachment; however,

feelings, experiences, and beliefs regarding God, heaven and souls persisted (Davie, 2003). Therefore, the spiritual landscape appeared to be evolving but unclear, and although religion was in decline, spiritual belief endured.

Nowadays, however, people's spiritual inclinations may be theistic, i.e. related to God, creating better relationships with God and an openness to mysterious encounters, or extra-theistic, related to a core self, building connections with the community, experiencing nature, beauty, awe, and seeking meaning and transcendence (Ammerman, 2013; 2021). Moreover, people may engage in spiritual activities and practices outside formalised religious contexts and may even identify as unchurched or spiritual, not religious (Fuller, 2001; Smith and Denton, 2009; Mercadante, 2014; Pew Research Centre, 2017). According to York (2001), such spiritual diversity may be viewed as characteristic of an information age, where easy information access allows familiarity with religions and religious movements beyond one's birthplace. In addition, books, journals, television documentaries, and the Internet help increase knowledge of new spiritual practices. Therefore, an interconnected world can make spiritual pluralism a possible option. Moreover, increased access to multiple perspectives may allow people to select a personalised spirituality easily. Despite this, information research in spirituality and religion has been narrowly focused. Many studies have looked at religious information on and off the Internet (e.g. Campbell 2005, 2010, 2012) and have explored people's religious and spiritual informational activities (e.g. Siracky, 2013; Gorichanaz, 2016) but have seldom examined unaffiliated, extra-theistic and spiritual but not religious expressions. Studies investigating spirituality outside formalised religion are few but growing and may have interesting implications for understanding spiritual informational behaviours and strategies outside traditional religious contexts. However, a synthesis of the current literature on spirituality and religion in information research is still missing. To this end, this chapter seeks to answer the following research question[6]:

- RQ1 How have scholars explored religion and spirituality within information research, and what are the gaps in the current literature?

[6] This is research question 1 of 7; the formulations and organisation of research objectives and questions are explained in detail in Chapter 3: General Research Design: A reflexive account.

2.2 Method and Literature Search Technique

Information research deals with how and why people collect, organise, retrieve and present information in various contexts and subject matters (Bates, 2007). As such, information research can relate to research in several fields, such as information science research, social studies of information, media and communication research, museum studies and librarianship. In addition, researchers can look at information-related topics in specific contexts; for example, they may examine information seeking for spiritual needs, the relationship between new media and spirituality, or the relationship between spirituality and Internet use. Therefore, I used a literature review to understand explorations of spirituality and religion in these different areas and defined information research as multidisciplinary research conducted across various information-related disciplines. Since literature reviews gauge existing understandings in a domain, this method can help identify trends and spot gaps.

I chose Google Scholar to gather the literature for review as this allowed me to retrieve literature from several fields simultaneously. I also considered and searched other databases, such as Library and Information Science Abstracts, Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts, Scopus and Semantic Scholar, but found relatively fewer results using these systems. Moreover, in addition to traditional peer-reviewed journal articles, Google Scholar's results included broader literature, such as conference proposals, working papers and posters from several fields, which helped me understand the formally published works better. In preparatory searches, I discovered that the terms 'religion' and 'prayer' sufficiently captured most theistic conceptualisations of spirituality; however, for extra-theistic conceptualisations, the terms 'contemplation', 'meditation' and 'yoga' often served as notional replacements for spiritual practice. Therefore, in addition to searches for articles about spirituality and religion, I also included searches for contemplation, yoga and meditation.

While searching Scholar, I used the keywords[7]: spirituality, spiritual, religion, religious, contemplation, contemplative, meditation, meditative, yoga, and prayer. However, I used the operators 'AND information', 'AND Internet', 'AND world wide web', 'AND online', 'AND document', 'AND museum/s', ' AND gallery', 'AND galleries', 'AND archive/s', 'AND library', 'AND librarianship'

[7] I explain and reflect on my keyword choice in Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account.

and 'AND libraries' for each keyword in an attempt to restrict the number of results to article titles within information-related fields. I also examined the literature cited within the retrieved articles to include other significant works uncaptured by these keywords. I chose to review the literature over the past 30 years and limited my search to works published in English between 1st January 1990 and 1st January 2023.

After removing duplicates and false positives, I examined 115 peer-reviewed articles, 44 book chapters, 24 theses and 17 unrefereed papers (see Supplementary Materials for a detailed breakdown). Since I aimed to understand how scholars have explored spirituality and religion collectively and possibly as divergent concepts, I organised the literature into religion and spirituality categories. I categorised works that used only spirituality and spiritual in their titles rather than religion as 'spirituality-related' because I felt, in doing so, these works implicitly or explicitly intended to emphasise spirituality rather than religion. In contrast, I categorised those that used either religion/religious alone or in conjunction with spirituality/spiritual as 'religion-related' research as these made no such distinction. I then analysed both types separately by looking for shared notions and understandings of information-related, religion-related, and spirituality-related concepts within the various information research fields.

2.3 Religion in Information and Communication Research

In the broadest sense, scholars have explored religion within information and communication research in two ways. Firstly, by examining people's online religious activities (internet studies) and second, by analysing people's informational strategies in religious contexts (information behaviour studies). The first orientation includes research generally motivated to understand the sociology of religion in new informational environments. In contrast, the second seeks to uncover how and why people seek and use various forms of information for religious matters. Although both orientations have slightly different motivations, they employ shared terminologies such as information seeking and browsing. They also share a set of common sociological frameworks. I discuss the understandings available from both these orientations, beginning with research on religion in Internet studies.

2.3.1 Religion in Internet Studies

Research on religion in internet studies began in the mid-1990s as several authors highlighted a prominent growth in religious representation online (e.g. O'Leary, 1996; Zaleski, 1997; Brasher,

2001). Many early studies used ethnographic methods and content analyses to describe particular online communities, websites, or environments (Campbell, 2011). Researchers analysed official and unofficial websites and explored central questions such as what religious information is on the Internet, who is using it, and why? These studies can help us understand the kinds of religious information available online. For example, Helland's (2000) article points out that religious information on the early Internet was divided into two categories. The first, which he called 'religion online', included official websites where people could access information such as religious texts, sermons, prayer times and guides. The second, 'online religion', comprised unofficial websites and forums where individuals could participate in religious discussions, conduct rituals and request religious services. The article also emphasised that religious organisations (such as the Vatican and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) created websites primarily for one-to-many communication purposes without allowing for reciprocal input from those receiving information. However, in contrast, ordinary religious individuals created and used websites to facilitate discussions about religious beliefs, share personal opinions and receive feedback (Helland, 2000).

Similarly, Bunt's (1997; 2000) studies reveal that Islamic information on the early Internet consisted of explicitly 'religious material' such as digital versions of the Quran and broader personal accounts of Muslim practices and experiences. In his work, Bunt (2000) highlights various types of online Islamic information. For example, on many early websites, the Quran was available in several languages, often accompanied by audio clips of traditional recitations, which people downloaded to understand proper recitation techniques and develop better recitation styles (Bunt, 2000). In addition to the Quran, some websites also had other information, such as personal accounts of the Hajj pilgrimage. These accounts helped provide other Muslims with travel information for Hajj, suggestions on what to pack, and appropriate prayers for different aspects of the pilgrimage (Bunt, 2000). Finally, some websites also discussed concepts such as sexual identities (e.g. being a gay Muslim), gender-related concerns (women's issues) and mystically inclined perspectives ('Sufi' orders) that might be seen as radical or 'un-Islamic' in other Muslim contexts (Bunt, 2000). In these cases, Bunt noted that people often used websites that provided anonymity and confidentiality whilst 'permitting the circulation of opinions about Islam, which [did] not find favour within home cultural-social contexts' (Bunt, 2000, p. 130).

Horsfall's (2000) analysis of early websites of established religious organisations (such as the Vatican and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) shows that information on these sites

was limited to telephone directories, local church locations, information about the Bible and reference information for religious officials. However, information on newer and possibly controversial religious organisations' websites (such as the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church) also included information to counter negative publicity and actively educate members and non-members. Her study also points out that official websites sometimes contained personal records; for example, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provided information about people's genealogical histories (Horsfall, 2000).

In contrast to the formal information provided on official websites, information shared on some fundamentalist websites (such as those concerning beliefs about the end of the world and subsequent (God's) judgement) included conversations about specific religious topics or convictions (Howard, 2000). Howard's (2000) ethnography of dispensationalist websites argued that the discourses promoted through such sites helped foster information exchange among individuals who shared similar convictions (e.g. Judgement Day) but possibly held different beliefs associated with those convictions (e.g. the Rapture vs Armageddon). Therefore, religious information on the early Internet comprised explicitly religious information, i.e. authoritative and sacred texts; official religious information, i.e. one-way communications between organisations and members (and non-members) and unofficial religious information, such as personal experiences and discussions about religious matters.

As the Internet evolved, later research into online religion expanded to investigate the opportunities and obstacles created by diverse and freely available online information. Hadden and Cowan (2000) noted that information about almost every religious tradition, movement or group was increasingly available online. Therefore, the abundance of information and relative ease of access (at least in the West) made online religious information-seeking possible. However, it also created new information environments with particular characteristics and mechanisms. While earlier work helped map out the variety of online religious information, later studies can help us understand why people used the Internet to seek religious information and the broader characteristics of their interactions.

For example, Lövheim's (2004) work concerning young people's online religious interactions reveals that younger individuals used the Internet to discuss their religious convictions and beliefs more deeply. In her study, some individuals felt that talking about religious and spiritual issues through proximal interactions and only with those in one's local area was limited by social etiquette

and compulsions to agree with others face-to-face (Lövheim, 2004). In contrast, online exchanges allowed for heated debates with disparate individuals about conflicting beliefs, resulting in more satisfying interactions. Apart from the possibility of debating beliefs, some young people also felt the Internet provided a means of learning about unconventional religions, such as Wiccan practices and witchcraft. Therefore, online interactions helped young people create a sense of personal religious identity (Lövheim, 2004). However, they also had limitations; as one of her participants pointed out, online religious interactions favoured 'a rhetorical style based on snappy arguments, polarized debates, wit, and theoretical knowledge' (p. #).

Online religious information could also help circumvent certain obstacles. For example, neo-pagan religions, such as Wicca, require young people to learn about religious rituals and practices from elders as part of a coven (Berger and Ezzy, 2004). This might not always be possible since suitably qualified elders are rarely available close by. In these circumstances, seeking information from the Internet might help free young seekers from the need to search for a coven (Berger and Ezzy, 2004). Berger and Ezzy (2004) described this as particularly important for underage seekers, as covens might be reluctant to train anyone under eighteen for fear of litigation by angry parents. A worrying concern for several scholars here was the information presented by specific religious movements seen as cults. Since the Internet allowed all individuals and groups to share information freely, researchers examined if the information provided by some new religious movements could also be used to recruit new members. This concern came to the fore after the mass suicide of 39 members of a new religious movement (Heaven's Gate) in 1997 led to fears about the presence of 'spiritual predators' on the world wide web (Dawson and Hennebry, 1999). However, numerous studies found little empirical evidence that online information provision increased recruitment to new religious movements (Dawson and Hennebry, 1999; Mayer, 2000; Krogh and Pillifant, 2004).

The 2001 September 11 terror attacks brought greater attention to religious issues. Millions of people (many for the first time) sent and received prayers online, and many Americans turned to online sources to seek information about Islam. By the mid-2000s, more and more people were using the Internet for religious purposes. Larsen (2004) noted that by 2001 'more people had gotten religious or spiritual information online than had gambled online, used Web auction sites, traded stocks online, placed phone calls on the Internet, or done online banking, or used Internet-based dating services' (p. #). Most online religious interactions, however, were solitary, with religious Internet surfers treating the Internet as a library, hunting for information, and occasionally interacting with

friends and strangers to swap prayers and advice (Larsen, 2004). Still, some groups refrained from using the Internet freely.

Campbell and Golan (2011) noted that ultra-orthodox and fundamentalist religious groups (e.g. Jewish Orthodox groups) typically prohibited online information engagements, fearing they were contamination and moral pollution sources. However, as online information environments and Internet use became more embedded within everyday activities and workplaces, some groups created 'digital enclaves' to enable controlled participation whilst attempting to protect their communities. These enclaves included websites aimed selectively at specific Orthodox groups, were focused on religious content and discussions within those groups, and were filtered using extensive application and participation processes (Campbell and Golan, 2011). Although participation was selective and controlled, these websites often allowed personal and controversial discussions. Therefore, new online information environments both affirmed and challenged Orthodox religious authority and identity within bounded communities by providing safe spaces for discussions that would typically not be allowed publicly (Campbell, 2011).

More recently, with the increase in user-generated content, pervasive network connectivity and more interactive communication channels, religious information on the Internet now includes 24-hour live feeds, YouTube videos, Facebook discussions, songs, music, memes, blogs and podcasts. This new environment helps individuals participate in rituals virtually, gather religious knowledge, maintain relationships, and build new friendships but also reshapes existing social and religious structures by facilitating newer forms of networking, activism and spiritual practice (Tomalin, Starkey and Halafoff, 2015; Campbell and Garner, 2016). Both religion online and online religion (i.e., formal information channels and informal participatory interactions) provide resources for religious and spiritual meaning-making. Moreover, searching for information on and amongst different religions allows individuals to understand and create personal religious identities in pluralistic, post-traditional and information-enabled ways.

2.3.2 Religion in Information Behaviour Studies

Apart from religion in Internet studies, a second type of religion-related information research concerns work-related religious information behaviour, i.e., the information behaviour of religious professionals, and everyday life religious information behaviour, i.e., the behaviour of ordinary religious individuals. Unlike internet studies, where scholars have examined established and new

religious movements (such as Wicca and Scientology), information behaviour researchers have mainly studied behaviours in established religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, with most studies concerning the first two. These include studies concerning Christian church leaders (clergy, pastors and ministers), Islamic leaders (Ulama) and ordinary Christian, Muslim and Buddhist individuals. I elaborate on these in the following subsections.

2.3.2.1 Information Behaviours of Christian and Islamic Leaders

Several early studies have examined clergy's information-seeking behaviours within particular work-related and professional roles (e.g. Phillips, 1992; Tanner, 1993; Wicks, 1999). For example, Wicks (1999) interviewed pastoral clergy from several Christian congregations in Canada to determine the influence of work worlds and work roles on their information-seeking behaviours. He defined a pastor's work world as comprised of particular theological, denominational and congregational worlds and his or her role as a preacher, administrator or caregiver. A pastor may, for example, be theologically conservative, part of an Anglican denomination, hold a large congregation and perform various work-related duties for different roles. Wicks' study notes that, in general, pastors' information behaviours are closed (i.e. restricted to sources within their theological, denominational and congregational work world) when attempting to seek information for preaching and administrative tasks; however, they are open (i.e. open to information sources and channels from beyond their worlds) when seeking information for caregiving.

Like Wicks, Lambert's (2010) study reports that Baptist ministers prefer known authoritative sources (formal spiritual texts) for preaching research but might consider newer informal sources for administrative work. In addition, Lambert's study also examined ministers' stopping behaviours (i.e., how ministers judge their information-seeking sessions to be finished or decide to give up) and reports that similar to ordinary individuals, ministers stop seeking more information when they have 'had enough'.

Roland's (2008; 2012) case study qualitatively analysed one clergy member's decision and Sense-Making strategies for sermon preparation. His study indicates that clergy possibly use standardised lectionaries and church calendars to help decide on weekly sermon topics. In addition, he notes that clergy members might prefer information sources that align with their congregations' biblical attitudes and literacies when preparing sermons. Aside from the conventional strategies noted by Roland, Michels's (2011; 2012; 2014) studies highlight that clergy often seek guidance

through prayer to seek answers, make decisions and prepare for various tasks. He identified this through an ethnographic study of church leaders in Canada whose congregations were engaged in a restructuring or re-visioning process. In his study, Michels described prayer as communicating with God to receive information for cognitive (wisdom and direction) and affective (peace-related) information needs and positioned this behaviour as analogous to seeking information from personal sources.

More recently, Lacović and Tanacković (2018) surveyed several hundred parish priests in Croatia and found that priests typically require information about theology, general culture, psychology, and pedagogy for liturgy and caregiving roles. In addition, their study reports that many priests now go online to find liturgy-related information; however, they still prefer to seek information from colleagues and other members of pastoral and economic boards for caregiving. That clergy prefer to curate their sources through personal contacts and the Internet rather than seeking help from public/specialised library staff is also reported more widely in other studies (e.g. Wicks, 1999; Curran and Burns, 2011). Outside work-related settings, Dankasa's (2015) study examined clergy's information-seeking behaviours in everyday life, such as for sports and leisure activities. His is possibly the only study to include clerical behaviours unrelated to work worlds and roles. However, it also notes that distinguishing between the clergy's work life and everyday life is complicated, as religious professionals' work often functions as a vocation, calling or way of life rather than an exclusive professional role. As such, Dankasa's study reports that clergy members' professional religious commitments (such as being celibate) can sometimes more broadly intrude on their everyday information practices and behaviours. To the extent that clergy members might prefer not to seek information from people outside their immediate clerical circles for fear of being judged or misunderstood.

Bakar and Saleh (2011), Saleh and Bakar (2013) and Saleh and Sadiq (2013) are possibly the only studies concerning the behaviours of Islamic religious professionals. In their first study, Bakar and Saleh (2011) adopted Wicks' (1999) questionnaire to identify the information resource needs of the Ulama in Nigeria. Their study reports that the Ulama have scripture-related needs similar to Christian professionals. Later Saleh and Bakar (2013) and Saleh and Sadiq (2013) attempted to examine the Ulama's information-seeking behaviours for preaching and counselling roles using larger sample sizes. Unlike studies of Christian religious professionals in the West, Saleh and Bakar and Saleh and Sadiq's studies report that the Ulama often seek help from local libraries and library

professionals rather than the Internet. This difference perhaps reflects the different socio-economic contexts of the studies and might be considered a potent motivation for researchers to examine religious information behaviours in non-Western contexts.

Therefore, we somewhat understand religious information behaviours and strategies in work-related settings; however, our understanding is limited mainly to Christianity and Islam, two historically intersecting traditions wherein professional religious literacy typically involves similar ideas of effectively understanding and interpreting divine scripture. In addition, most studies of religious professionals have been conducted in Western contexts, with a few studies outside Europe and North America mostly relating to religious professionals in Nigeria. Missing are studies that examine the information behaviours of professionals in other major religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism, as well as behaviours in new religious movements and non-institutionally-affiliated and folk religions.

2.3.2.2 Information Behaviours of Lay Christian, Muslim and Buddhist Individuals

Besides religious professionals, researchers have also explored the information behaviours of lay religious individuals in various settings, such as bible study sessions, pilgrimages, formal/informal religious gatherings, daily-life interactions, health-related uncertainty, religious teaching and learning, migration and other social settings (e.g. Gorichanaz, 2016; Caidi, 2019; Gaston, Dorner and Johnstone, 2015; Caidi and Innocenti; 2018). Here, scholars have attempted to understand people's motivations for religious information-seeking rather than examining pre-defined tasks or roles. In a relatively early example, Coco's (1998; in Dervin et al., 2012) dissertation used Dervin's Sense-Making methodology to examine forty Catholic individuals' recollections of conflicts between life experiences and spiritual understandings. In her research, her informants described several types of barriers and struggles, especially when sexually maturing and coming into adulthood, during which their Catholic education conflicted with wider relationships and power struggles (p. 8). Accordingly, Coco's work indicated that balancing adherence to religious teachings and practices could be difficult for some individuals and consequently, religious individuals might view their religious education as confusing or burdensome. Following this, Quirke's (2012) and Guzik's (2017; 2018) studies identified that religious information-seeking could sometimes form part of greater social integration and assimilation strategies for migrants and recent converts. Quirke (2012) interviewed seven young Afghan newcomers to Canada in her study. Her (2012) poster reports frequent technology-enabled religious information sharing and the use of digital

versions of sacred texts. However, it also notes newcomers' wariness of using websites to seek information about Islam due to concerns over the perceived accuracy of online sources. Caidi and MacDonald (2008) also reported this guarded behaviour. They emphasised that several Muslim Canadians felt overly scrutinised and therefore mistrusted conventional media and communication channels in a post-9/11 world (Caidi and MacDonald, 2008).

Guzik (2018) ethnographically examined the religious conversion experiences of Muslims in Toronto. Her paper emphasises embodied information practices, i.e., practices where the body acts as an important actor and information source (Olsson and Lloyd, 2017). And reports that Muslim converts might wear particular clothes or change their appearances to convey information regarding their new religious identities. Her study reveals that religious information often relates to one's sense of identity, and sharing this information through embodiment might help facilitate identity formation (or transformation) in everyday life contexts. Religious information is also sought in contexts where a new religious identity might involve a decision to make religion one's sole activity, purpose or life vocation. For example, Hickey's (2017) study demonstrates that women contemplating life as religious sisters or nuns extensively seek information to help discern their religious calling. To do so, they use various digital and formal print resources; however, seeking out and listening to other women's lived experiences often provides them with better knowledge and information than simply using online resources (Hickey, 2017). Therefore, Quirke's (2012) and Hickey's (2017) studies illustrate that religious information on the Internet and other formal print resources might only superficially address people's religious concerns. Moreover, Caidi and MacDonald (2008) demonstrate that, due to socio-political contexts, Muslims in Western countries might perceive online religious information differently than Christians or other religious groups.

Information practices can also differ among religious sub-groups. Freeburg (2013), for example, reports that information practices within different religious congregations intersect with wider ideas and beliefs held within those congregations. In his doctoral work, he examined the information practices of two congregations holding different views regarding homosexuality within the same church and discovered their information practices as mutually distinct. His is possibly the only study to examine the information practices of religious groups rather than individuals, and reports that congregations open and accepting (of homosexuality) used more unique information sources than their counterparts. In addition, although both congregations in his study relied extensively on sacred texts such as the Bible, he reported that the liberal congregation was more

critically reflexive of its content than the conservative one. Before this, Freeburg (2011) examined information processes within bible study groups by surveying individuals in three US Midwestern churches. Here, he identified that although individuals used a large amount of unique information at the sessions (i.e., information from sources known only to a few members of the group), this information was often debated, discussed and validated against shared information sources recognised by all members of the group (such as the Bible). Freeburg's studies, therefore, demonstrate that although individuals might use several unique religious information sources, these may often be considered less authoritative than certain standard or cornerstone information sources. Moreover, wider beliefs and attitudes amongst particular religious groups might intersect differently with these standard sources and their perceived authority or value.

Religious information interactions may also be conceptualised as different from those *about* religion (cf. Bronstein, 2007). For example, Lipton and Nyrose (2011) examined student essay submissions for the same (religious studies) course at two different US college institutions (one faith-based and the other secular). Their study indicates that while students at secular institutions choose essay topics due to class discussions, personal interests and negative experiences, those at faith-based institutions often research and write on topics to understand personal religious experiences. Likewise, Siracky's (2013) ethnographic account helps reveal that (unlike non-religious students) Catholic students' religious information interactions often explicitly represent religious intents, such as attempts to communicate with God. Therefore religion-related information interactions may be viewed as occurring at various *levels* of religiosity; however, those that are more religious tend to possess greater aspects of personal meaning than those simply about religion.

Individuals might also seek religious information sources during problematic times and health-related uncertainties (Baker, 2004; Fourie, 2008; Cadge and Bergey, 2013). And as Cadge and Bergey (2013) note, they may even differentiate between spirituality and religion. However, these interactions might sometimes be framed negatively. For example, Cadge and Bergey's (2013) examination of people's behaviours during health-related uncertainties indicates that while many people seek religious information to help support other biomedical information sources, some may do so to appraise their illnesses spiritually and may at times express anger and dissatisfaction with religious information sources. Religious information interactions may, therefore, at times, be emotionally and cognitively disconcerting. This can also be seen empirically where, for example, Internet searches for religious information usually last for much longer than other everyday

searches and are often more intensely articulated (Wan-Chik, Clough and Sanderson, 2013; Cunningham and Hinze, 2014).

Outside Christianity and Islam, Chabot's (2019) study is possibly the only one to explore the religious information practices of Western Buddhists. In his (2019) dissertation, Chabot (2019) identifies that; in addition to conventional practices such as listening and reading, Buddhists often employ strategies such as contemplating and meditating to facilitate spiritual understanding. In addition, he notes that Buddhists' religious information-seeking might be motivated by broader existential concerns, such as a desire to achieve a 'good' death, be happier and help others avoid sadness and suffering. Shortly before this, in a working paper, Chabot (2014) discussed potential applications and limitations of Dervin's Sense-Making theory and approach vis-a-vis Buddhist hermeneutic conceptions and understandings of individuals' sensemaking patterns.

Overall, many studies demonstrate that everyday religious information-seeking behaviours can often be informative, formative, and transformative, i.e., in addition to helping seek and use information, these behaviours may also contribute to personal growth, identity formation and spiritual development (Vamanu and Guzik, 2015). However, with a few exceptions, here, too, most research has looked at behaviours in mainstream Christianity, with rare one-off studies concerning Muslim and Buddhist individuals. In addition, Western contexts continue to dominate, with very little known about religious information practices in Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the Far East.

2.4 Religion in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums Research

Galleries, libraries, archives and museums form part of wider knowledge and cultural heritage institutions often grouped as GLAM institutions. In the West, these institutions are generally classified as different from religious establishments such as churches, mosques and temples; however, many house religious artefacts, objects and installations and may also provide access to religion-related information and experience. Accordingly, the following subsections review religion-related research in GLAM institutions, beginning with religion in galleries and museums.

2.4.1 Religion in Gallery and Museum Studies

In museum studies, Duncan (1995; 2005) notes that many museums are comparable with ceremonial buildings (such as temples) and are sometimes deliberately designed to resemble

religious institutions. Like churches and temples, museums often serve as spaces for rituals; however, being secular spaces, ritual practices here can often be implicitly religious and subtle (Duncan, 2005). Several museum scholars have conceptually examined the appropriateness of implicit religion in museums. For example, Buggeln (2012) discussed the appropriateness of religion and spirituality-related behaviours by reflecting on her experiences in three American museums—the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC and the National Museum of the American Indian. In her essay, she points out that although all three museums are contemplative and reverential, the Metropolitan's displays sometimes include cautionary signs to underline that the sacred spaces represented are not meant to be seen as *real*. On the other hand, the Museum of the American Indian has multiple references to spirituality and religion (and overtly presents itself as a sacred space in general), and the Holocaust Memorial Museum is rendered sacred and contemplative by the weight of tragic human loss and emotion. In contrast, the signage in these spaces encourages contemplative silence and reverence, similar to those in temples. Therefore, in Buggeln's (2012) view, the appropriateness of religious behaviours in museums is often contingent on context and museum professionals' ideas and views.

Aside from grappling with implicit religion, Paine (2012) suggests that museum professionals' secular worlds are sometimes challenged by attempts to include and reproduce religious objects in museums. He explains that although most Western societies are viewed as secular, religious sentiments still hold ground in many traditional cultures, where symbols and artefacts have wider religious and spiritual connotations. These sentiments can sometimes clash with ill-considered ideas attempting to present religious artefacts simply as aesthetic installations. Moreover, similar to sacralisation, 'museumincation' (i.e., the entry of an object into a museum) can ascribe to artefacts a particular kind of meaning that may be incongruous with the one previously held (Paine, 2012). Likewise, in gallery studies, Alderton's (2014) paper on Religion at Te Papa Tongarewa builds upon Duncan's (1995; 2005) ideas to question the place of state institutions in dealing with, commenting on and standing in place of sacred artefacts, especially in predominantly secular societies and cultures. Therefore, by portraying religious objects, galleries and museums can often influence popular understandings of religion, giving rise to various issues (Buggeln, Paine and Plate, 2017). However, Duncan's (1995), Buggeln's (2012), Paine's (2012), Alderton's (2014) and Buggeln, Paine and Plate's (2017) works serve as examples of the few conceptual attempts in gallery and museum studies to look at implicit religion; future studies might help better understand the intersections

between museums and religion by empirically examining matters and various religion-related issues.

2.4.2 Religion in Library and Archive Research

Many libraries function as spaces for silence and contemplation; however, they do not invoke a kind of implicit religion like the one seen in certain museums. Like museums, most public and academic libraries are viewed as secular institutions; however, where museums might allow for (and even encourage experiences of) the numinous, most libraries are seen as spaces for rational information provision.

Many academic and public libraries facilitate access to religious materials, often as a commitment to people's intellectual freedoms; this, however, does not always translate into religion being given equal consideration compared with other types of information. In library research, Loria (2006) is possibly the only scholar to explore the idea of 'religious information poverty' by emphasising the Australian state school system's lack of attention to religious education. In her paper, she argues that although religious education is part of the school curriculum in Australian state schools, young school-age students often lack a nuanced understanding of various religious traditions. As a result, they cannot partake in and appreciate the religious diversity of the contemporary cosmopolitan world. She points out that religion often plays a role in major international crises and debates. Yet, in her view, the average Australian state school student cannot distinguish between common religious figures such as the Buddha or an ayatollah (Loria, 2006, p.23). This might also resemble other Western state school systems more generally, where religious education increasingly plays a marginal role in young students' development and education. In addition, Loria emphasises that although many young people express interest in the spiritual, they generally do not seek answers from religious institutions (Loria, 2006). Therefore, providing better quality religious education and information through libraries and state schools might help young people explore deeper existential questions and provide a more meaningful education.

Aside from religious information poverty, the lack of religious information provision through libraries and schools has also been framed as detrimental to ethnic understanding and inclusion. For example, Onyebuchi's (2022) paper suggests that multi-ethnic and religiously diverse countries (in her case, Nigeria) with persistent political and terrorist-related turmoil can struggle to achieve peaceful coexistence among various religious and social groups. However, school libraries

embedded within wider state education systems can help promote ethnic and religious understanding and reduce antisocial behaviours by providing resources on issues concerning ethnicity and religion.

In archival studies, Warkentin's (2020) thesis is perhaps the only example of research examining religion in modern archiving and preservation. His main argument posits that Christian Church archives have intrinsic spiritual value and, thus, in increasingly digital information environments where newer records are often 'born digitals', archivists must seek to create better long-term preservation strategies to hold on to these for future generations. Therefore, Loria's (2006), Onyebuchi's (2022) and Warkentin's (2020) works are examples of the limited research concerning religion in archival studies and librarianship. Future studies may, therefore, consider empirically appraising the effectiveness of library-supported religious education, determining libraries' functions regarding religious and spiritual information provision and ways of better preserving increasingly digital spirituality-related texts and materials.

2.5 Spirituality in Information and Communication Research

As will become evident, information research concerning religion considerably outweighs research looking explicitly at spirituality. This is perhaps expected as the notion of spirituality as conceptually distinct from religion is relatively emergent (see Section 2.1). As an early example, Clark's (1995; 1999; in Dervin et al., 2012) dissertation examined spirituality-related discussions in an intimate feminist spirituality group. Here, Clark used Dervin's Sense-Making methodology and framework to understand her participants' spiritual or paranormal visions and explained that several participants engaged in practices such as reading and discussion to supplement and reaffirm their visions (Dervin et al., 2012, p.6). Likewise, Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2006; also in Dervin et al., 2012) provided examples of qualitative relationships between people's aesthetic or art-related experiences and those typically considered spiritual or transcendence-related. Therefore, Clark's and Foreman-Wernet and Dervin's studies serve as early examples of research indicating possible connections between spirituality and information. Following this, Kari's (2007) Review of the Spiritual in Information Studies was the next significant development. In his review, Kari (2007) characterised the spiritual as akin to concepts like 'esoterica, magic, mystique, New Age, occult, paranormal, religion, supernatural, and superstition' (p. 936). However, his review asserted that religion, or religiously affiliated forms of spirituality, were enshrouded in complex social and political structures and accordingly did not include articles that looked at religious information.

Instead, Kari recommended that researchers consider religiously affiliated contexts separately. Through his review, Kari (2007) discovered that scholars broadly conceived of spiritual information as information that may be reckoned holy (e.g. The Bible or The Quran), be acquired through spiritual means (such as spiritual channelling), originate from a spiritual entity (such as an Angel or God), or be on the topic of spiritual matters. This discovery helped establish a definition for spiritual information, which many scholars have used to describe information in affiliated *and* unaffiliated contexts such as pilgrimage, bible study sessions, meditation classes and formal/informal religious gatherings. In addition, Kari (2007) identified several ways of interacting with spiritual information, such as describing, conceptualising, seeking, storing, using, processing and providing, enabling further explorations into relationships between spirituality and information (Kari, 2009; 2011a; 2011b). Kari's review concluded that existing knowledge in this domain was sorely inadequate and recommended that scholars look more seriously at informational sources such as sacred books, spiritualist channelling and divine inspiration.

Following this, Kari (2009; 2011a; 2011b) conducted two qualitative studies examining a corpus of Finnish texts reportedly received spiritually/paranormally. He explained that such texts 'may be almost anything from the voice of conscience to (alleged) communication with 'higher beings'' (2009, p. 454). In his first study, Kari (2009) analysed the content of numerous spiritual texts and reported that many contained instructions for various types of information use, such as acquiring, identifying, developing, thinking, examining, creating, presenting, communicating, and exchanging information. Subsequently, his second study (2011) reported several outcomes of spiritual information use and the effects of and dispositions to spiritual information.

In addition to Kari's studies, Gaston et al.'s (2015) paper reports on the general prevalence of spirituality in Buddhist Laos by emphasising the use of spiritual information sources for daily life concerns among Lao people and highlighting spiritual information interactions as a prominent mode of everyday information-seeking behaviour. Following this, more recently, spirituality has been discussed in terms of spiritual practice and contemplation. Contemplation in secular terms refers more generally to thoughtfulness and introspection; however, many techniques for contemplation originate in religious and spiritual traditions. For example, contemplative practices like Lectio Divina (divine reading) come from Western Christian traditions and involve reading from the heart rather than building epistemic understandings and connections. Similarly, Loving-Kindness meditations (from Buddhist traditions) attempt to empathise more deeply by

vividly visualising others' sufferings and misfortunes. Here, some scholars have conceptually explored intersections between such practices and information. For example, Latham et al. (2020) suggest that contemplative practices such as silence, centering and meditation might have distinctly informational features that help facilitate self-understanding, spiritual growth and rich identity formation (Latham et al., 2020). Their paper helps assert that information researchers have typically examined conventional interactions, such as those associated with data, knowledge and information (a reference to the popular pyramid conceptualisation), and have paid less attention to interactions involving understanding and wisdom, such as those associated with spirituality and religion. Similarly, Gorichanaz and Latham (2019) offer a framework of contemplative information using aspects such as being, meaning, attention, unity, wisdom and compassion and also highlight that existing research has typically ignored contemplative information interaction and provision. Latham et al. (2020) and Gorichanaz and Latham (2019) help provide a broader conceptual framework for discussing spiritual information by facilitating connections with contemplative studies and other related disciplines.

2.6 Spirituality in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums Research

Some scholars have empirically explored spiritual needs and practices in library research. For example, Mross and Riehman-Murphy's (2018; 2019; 2021) work highlights the ubiquity of students praying at an American college/university library and campus. Their (2019) study surveyed numerous Penn State Abington students and indicates that despite being a secular space, many students choose the library as their preferred campus prayer location. In addition, through subsequent focus groups with students, Mross and Riehman-Murphy (2021) report that many students prefer similar reflection spaces and provisions regardless of religious faith or inclination. These provisions include spaces for reading spiritual texts in groups (such as for bible study sessions) or praying/meditating together in specifically designated rooms/locations. Therefore, although colleges and universities may have designated spiritual spaces elsewhere, due to campus dynamics and overall convenience, many students still prefer various attributes of libraries for attending to their spiritual needs and obligations (Mross and Riehman-Murphy, 2021).

In addition to Mross and Riehman-Murphy, Samson (2021) ethnographically explored the usefulness of a mindfulness/meditation space inside the University of Toronto Faculty of Information's combined learning/library resource space— Inforum. His thesis reports that such spaces help create a more contemplative infrastructure and may be considered essential for modern

libraries wishing to build an environment more conducive to reflection and relaxation. Aside from Samson's (2021) empirical work, some researchers have attempted to conceptualise public libraries as modern spaces for reflection and contemplation. For example, Pyati (2019) argues that in addition to epistemic information provision, modern libraries also have a role in cultivating patrons' inner lives through spiritual, religious and contemplative information and resource provision. Similarly, Gorichanaz (2021) envisages an Information Sanctuary as a modern intersection between an information institution and a contemplative institution. In museum studies, Cameron and Gatewood (2003) and Gatewood and Cameron (2004) note that people often visit historical sites and museums to seek emotional experiences that may closely resemble the numinous or spiritual. They explain that some people make personal connections with artefacts that may 'manifest as a deep engagement, empathy, or spiritual communion' (p. 57). Similarly, Latham (2013) points out that many people visit museums for intensely emotional experiences bordering on the mystical, numinous or spiritual. Similar to Duncan's (2005) and Buggeln's (2012) references to implicit religion, Cameron and Gatewood (2003), Gatewood and Cameron (2004), and Latham (2013) help point out implicit aspects of spirituality in museums. More concretely, Simpson (2013) discusses museums' role in appropriately preserving and protecting objects of spiritual value. Similar to arguments in Paine (2012) regarding religion, Simpson's (2013) paper emphasises that although objects from indigenous traditions may be better preserved and protected in museums, objects' broader cultural and spiritual significance must be paid attention to. To do so, she suggests that museums might create designated secular and spiritual sections and control access to materials by revealing and concealing them according to customary rules. Therefore, like information and communication research, museum studies and librarianship have also paid little attention to spiritual (or religiously unaffiliated) information interactions.

2.7 Current Gaps and Challenges

Although a significant amount of the literature on spirituality and religion relates to Internet studies, here, I focus on the gaps and challenges within the information behaviour and library research literature to keep to this thesis' disciplinary focus discussed in Section 0.2 earlier.

In information behaviour, scholars have examined religious and spiritual interactions; however, we understand religious professionals' behaviours and practices better than lay religious and spiritual individuals. In addition, missing also are studies concerning interactions in New Age, religiously unaffiliated spirituality, and indigenous and folk traditions. In library research, relatively few

studies have examined religious and spiritual issues. A fundamental concern in this area relates to whether and how spiritual needs may be supported in modern information institutions and the possible intersections between libraries and contemplative institutions. Accordingly, the gaps in library research relate to understanding the role of information institutions in spiritual information and resource provision and if such provisions are appropriately placed in modern libraries and information institutions. Regarding research challenges, like Helland's religion online/online religion, the reviewed information behaviour studies typically analyse two modes of spiritual and religious information interaction: 1) formalised and process-oriented interactions and 2) informal everyday interactions. Each orientation provides a useful way of researching religious/spiritual information interactions; however, each has limitations. In the first mode, studies typically employ problem-solving and Sense-Making frameworks to analyse various professional and everyday religious information tasks. In contrast, informal interaction studies emphasise relationships between religious/spiritual information and affective functions (e.g., meaning-making and identity formation). Moreover, process-oriented studies provide resource-focused insights into particular processes (e.g., bible study or sermon preparation) that may not capture information phenomena outside them. Finally, informal interaction studies focus on aspects such as identity formation and emotions; however, they do not indicate if and how these aspects help relate religious/spiritual interactions with other everyday interactions. I discuss these limitations in more detail and highlight possible alternative approaches in the following subsections:

2.7.1 Process-Oriented Religious and Spiritual Information Interactions

Several information behaviour studies examine religious and spiritual information interactions by analysing how individuals seek and use information during religious processes, tasks or faith-based activities, such as bible study sessions, counselling, pastoral care or religious education. While such an approach helps overlay informational processes (such as seeking behaviours) more generally onto religious and spiritual contexts (Kari and Hartel, 2007). Kari and Hartel (2007) point out that doing so risks making the examination less contextually sensitive. As a case in point, Guzik's (2018) study helps reveal that, besides seeking, ordinary individuals might also *embody* religious information for various purposes. Therefore, using traditional process-centred research approaches might not capture the variety of ways people interact with religious and spiritual information outside of those processes. This limitation also surfaces in studies looking to identify information needs in religious contexts.

For example, Bakar and Saleh's (2011) and Lacović and Tanacković's (2018) studies approach religious information research by attempting to identify professionals' information needs and resources in religious contexts. However, information scholars usually conceptualise information needs as knowledge-related or epistemic (Case, 2016). likewise, the needs identified by Lacović and Tanacković (2018) relate to learning about theology, general culture, psychology, and pedagogy-related topics and do not capture the meaning and fulfilment-related needs, for example, those identified by Chabot (2019). In addition, information needs often only superficially relate to individuals' underlying information-seeking motives. Taylor's (1962; 1968) articles on understanding patrons' questions are seminal for pointing to this.

As discussed in Section 1.3 earlier, Taylor examined how and why people asked questions at library reference desks and described people's needs as passing through visceral, conscious, formalised and compromised stages. His (1968) paper explains that as patrons' needs and concerns move between these four stages, they are influenced by professional and systems-related constraints. As a result, their authentic needs are often replaced by those that systems, professionals or librarians can meet. As such, information needs often represent systems' or professionals' capabilities/resources rather than patrons' information-seeking motives. Therefore, studies solely focused on identifying and catering to religious and spiritual *information needs* risk overlooking broader visceral and conscious information-seeking objectives.

2.7.2 Informal Religious and Spiritual Information Interactions

In contrast to the findings from process-centred approaches, informal interaction studies focus more on the role of religious and spiritual information in broader affective and existential life dimensions, such as seeking happiness, social assimilation and acceptance, personal fulfilment, spiritual growth, identity formation and building social relationships. Many of these studies, explicitly or implicitly, adopt what Kari and Hartel (2007) call context-centred research approaches. Such approaches choose a contextual rather than procedural focus and aim to identify and reconstruct the underlying information interactions and worlds within a particular context (Kari and Hartel, 2007). For example, Guzik's (2017) thesis focuses on understanding the overall religious conversion experiences rather than the specific information-seeking behaviours of Toronto Muslims. Similarly, Chabot's (2019) dissertation aims to identify and explain various contemplative practices of Western Buddhists different from conventionally-understood information practices. Therefore, such context-centred strategies can provide insights that might help expand current

research understandings beyond traditional informational processes; however, their findings often do not easily generalise or transfer to other contexts (Kari and Hartel, 2007). To deal with this, Kari and Hartel (2007) suggest categorising certain information phenomena as residing within various *pleasurable* and *profound* contexts that may function as an alternative (and possibly more generalisable) context-centred approach to researching spiritual and religious information interactions.

To explain, in their 2007 paper, Kari and Hartel proposed that many people naturally view their everyday activities as higher/lower depending on their perceived meaningfulness. For example, mundane activities such as tax filing might be seen by many as less meaningful or lower than hobbies and entertainment. Within higher things, they explained that profound (e.g., religious and spiritual) activities might further be viewed differently compared with pleasurable (e.g., leisure-related) affairs. However, they posit that many profound things might have shared qualities and informational aspects. This way, understandings of religious and spiritual information interactions might be generalised to other *profound* contexts such as creativity, emotions, altered states of mind, meaning and purpose, intuition, values, virtues and human development (Kari and Hartel, 2007). However, we lack theories and models to help operationalise this idea and further conceptualise and understand profound information interactions. Accordingly, having presented a review of the current literature and identified gaps and possible research approaches, I now outline this thesis' research areas and how I shall tackle them in the following section.

2.8 Prospective Research Areas and link to Chapter 3

This chapter presented a review of the literature on spirituality and religion in information research to consolidate current understandings and identify research gaps. The gaps in the information behaviour literature generally pertain to interactions outside established religious traditions and settings. Moreover, the gaps in librarianship include understanding whether and how spirituality and religion fit within modern library institutions and spaces. Accordingly, to carry forward with the aim discussed in Section 0.1, this thesis seeks to narrow down and focus on information interactions in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. In addition, it seeks to understand practising librarians' views regarding spirituality and religion-related needs in the context of modern library provision. To do so, it makes use of a context-centred approach suggested by Kari and Hartel to identify and understand various information-related phenomena in

contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. The next chapter provides a reflexive account of this thesis' general research design and approach.

3 General Research Design: A Reflexive Account

This chapter reflects on how I translated general research prospects into separate studies with particular objectives and questions. Doing so risks exposing the messy nature of a research project; however, a reflexive account can help offer an honest and open discussion about the data collection process (Ryan and Golden, 2006). Reflexivity can also 'help locate the researcher as a participant in the dynamic interrelationship of the research process' (Ryan and Golden, 2006, p. 1192). Accordingly, the following sections reflexively examine this thesis' data collection techniques, analysis methods, theoretical lenses, and tools. While detailed procedures, participant details and interview questions are presented later in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the following sections help explain my thesis' overarching research methodology and approach.

3.1 Overview and Formulation of Research Objectives

Reflexivity is a set of practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence research processes (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). When used to explain research that did not involve time in the field, a reflexive account can help researchers explain their relationships with the research context, how they came to know it and how they sought to deepen their appreciation of nuances (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Such accounts can also help enhance the credibility and rigour of the research process and make the researcher's positionality more transparent (DeSouza, 2004). Accordingly, this section helps discuss my early thoughts and interactions and clarifies my objective formulation process.

My preliminary literature readings helped me identify various understudied topics in spiritual and religious contexts. These readings included literature by Kari and Hartel (2007), Pyati (2019), Chabot (2019), Gorichanaz (2016), Kari (2007), Siracky (2013), Latham (2009; 2013) and Michels (2014). Some of these works indicated prospects for examining interactions such as bible study sessions and prayer. However, I did not wish to research overtly religious contexts as although I was spiritual, I did not consider myself religious and rejected most forms of prayer. Therefore my positionality influenced the research context from the beginning[8]. Kari's (2007) review paper provided me with a helpful way to define interactions in spiritual but not religious contexts; however, it did not help discern how these might be conceptualised differently from religious

[8] I provide a positionality statement in Section 3.1.1

contexts. In addition, I could not locate empirical studies that might offer precedents for examining information interactions outside conventional religious contexts. Getting fellow researchers within my research group to understand the conceptual differences between spirituality and religion was also challenging. Nevertheless, my understanding of this literature indicated I could orient my research to understand three perspectives: lay spiritual individuals, spiritual professionals and practising librarians. The literature I consulted (e.g. Pyati, 2019) emphasised a clear need to understand librarians' views regarding spiritual and religious needs; therefore, designing a study targeting this question seemed a sensible option and is where I started. I sought to understand how spiritual and religious needs were theoretically conceptualised and researched more broadly in disciplines outside of information and library science, as I imagined this would help me identify research precedents. This search led me to various self-reporting questionnaire techniques developed for identifying patients' spiritual needs in nursing and healthcare. Since emailing librarians to gather their opinions was a normative research practice, using a spiritual needs questionnaire to collect and understand librarians' views, I thought, was prudent. I, therefore, discussed this with my supervisor, and we agreed to go ahead with formulating a study with the objective of gathering and analysing librarians' views about spiritual needs and modern librarianship using an adapted version of Galek et al.'s (2005) spiritual needs questionnaire. Through this study, I began to evaluate and measure the prevalence and importance of considering spiritual needs in Western librarianship. However, after analysing my data and consulting with my supervisor, I realised that my data did not help me make such positivistic statements (i.e. precise claims about need frequency and prevalence typical of positivist and postpositivist research). Still, it allowed me to understand the various views held by practising librarians and their perceptions of the prevalence of spiritual needs among library patrons. This helped me understand the limits of the interpretivistic paradigm I was functioning in (I shall reflect more on this in section 3.3.3).

While the gaps in the librarianship literature were primarily related to understanding librarians' views about spirituality and spiritual and religious information provision, gaps in the information behaviour literature were generally related to building contextual understandings, analysing individual views and identifying spiritual information practices and behaviours. I felt these could be addressed by interviewing spiritual and religious people about their experiences or examining conventional process-centred interactions. However, I was reluctant to investigate bible study or prayer-related processes and was not interested in traditional religious settings such as temples, mosques or churches. Moreover, my brief endeavour to understand views and practices within a

particular bible study group reaffirmed my contention that I was the wrong person to research traditional religious contexts. Instead, I was better placed, I felt, to examine interactions and views in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. This contention again influenced my selection of the research setting. Due to prior knowledge and engagements, I knew of Monte Sahaja—a contemplative spiritual retreat centre in Portugal. The centre's website provided videos of residents' personal narratives and retreat experiences, including experiences of silent contemplation and other meditation practices. These narratives were sufficiently detailed and discussed residents' motivations for residing at the retreat centre and engaging with spiritual information sources. Meanwhile, in a 2019 CHIIR conference perspectives paper, my supervisor emphasised 'meaning-making' as frequently involving spiritual and religious information interactions (Ruthven, 2019). His paper highlighted that people's meaning-making attempts often involved spiritual and religious information seeking. However, it also indicated that information and library science often overlooked such information interactions and sources. Meaning-making, therefore, offered me a means of framing the retreat residents' interactions and narratives, and I used it as an interpretive lens for analysing this typically understudied information context. I formulated a context-centred exploration into contemporary spiritual (or religiously unaffiliated) information interactions by analysing videos of the residents' narratives and interpreting them through Park's (2013) spirituality-related meaning-making framework. I intended to first visit the retreat centre for a sustained period as a resident to observe and record the residents' interactions ethnographically. However, travel restrictions to limit the spread and impact of Covid-19 meant that this was no longer a possibility. Nevertheless, the videos, on their own, I felt, provided sufficiently detailed data for the study (I reflect on their limitations in section 3.3.1.3).

In their narratives, many retreat centre residents emphasised interactions with their resident teacher or Guru. In addition, several residents referred to their spiritual activities as searches. Moreover, the centre's website identified itself as 'a modern-day monastery for mature seekers'. These were not extraordinary revelations to me. From prior engagements with spiritual content and books, I knew that individuals in contemporary spirituality often sought help from professional (or self-identified) spiritual teachers or Gurus. In addition, I knew that *spiritual seeking* referred to taking part in retreats and engaging in spiritual talks, discussions and events in contemporary spiritual culture. However, since most seeking forms are implicitly or explicitly informational (Marchionini, 1995), I felt spiritual seeking was conceptually approximate to spiritual *information* seeking; Consequently, I used 'spiritual seeking' to frame contemporary spiritual information

interactions as an alternative to meaning-making and wished to understand further spiritual seekers' views, motivations, practices and behaviours. I sought first to clarify my understanding of the phenomenon by checking if (and how) spiritual seeking had been researched in the literature within sociology and contemporary religion. Roof (1993), Fuller (2001) and more recently, Mercadante (2014) and Sutcliffe (2016) highlighted spiritual seeking or Seekership as a prominent mode of contemporary spiritual engagement; however, they also emphasised that the phenomenon was under-theorised and warranted further examination. Accordingly, I felt interviewing spiritual teachers would help conduct such an examination and better understand contemporary spiritual and religious information interactions. Interviewing individual seekers could have also allowed for this; however, I felt such interviews would likely only lead to data similar to the video narratives. In contrast, interviewing teachers, I felt, would allow for a general understanding of views and motivations held more widely amongst seekers in contemporary spirituality. I felt this strategy was both practical as well as prudent. Accordingly, after discussing this with my supervisor, I formulated a study to interview spiritual teachers and speakers and analyse their views about spiritual seeking and contemporary spiritual information interactions.

These three formulations naturally related to working with three different participant/subject types (illustrated in Fig. C) and mapped onto three studies with the following objectives[9]:

1. Understand spiritual seekers' motivations and interactions in a contemporary spiritual or religiously unaffiliated context.
2. Construct and analyse descriptions of spiritual seeking through interviews with contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers.
3. Gather and understand practising librarians' attitudes and perceptions regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision.

[9] In addition to these three objectives, this thesis aims to review and consolidate understandings and identify gaps and future research prospects (achieved through Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research). This goal is clarified in section 3.3.4 and revisited as an additional objective in Chapter 7: General Discussion.

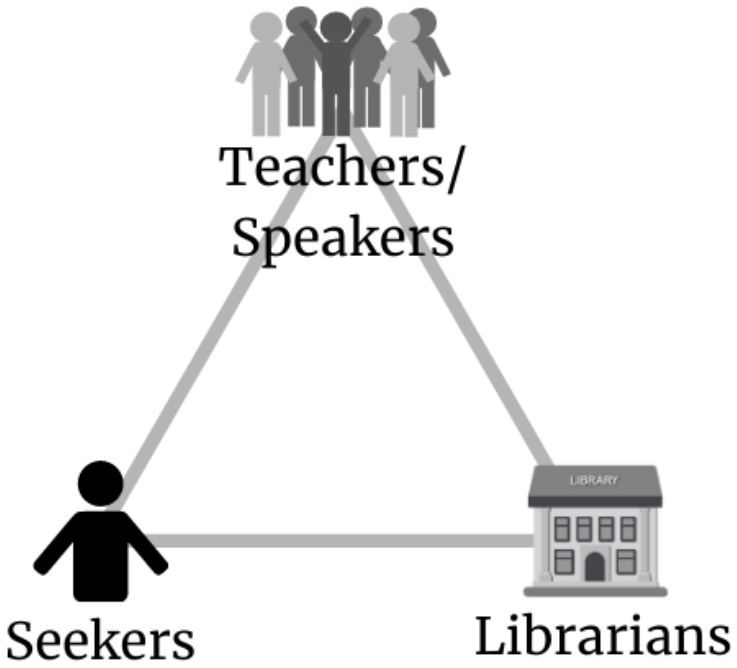


Figure C: Participant-type illustration

Pursuing these objectives enabled me to examine the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts by triangulating the motivations and interactions of information seekers (retreat residents), general thoughts and insights offered by information facilitators (spiritual teachers and speakers) and professional attitudes and perceptions of information providers (librarians).

I conducted my studies over three years. Accordingly, my understanding of contemporary spiritual beliefs, views and practices, and research methods evolved as I moved between the studies. For this reason, the overall research design was inherently emergent, and the understandings created by one study informed and influenced the design of others. In the following sections, I reflect on my thesis' research paradigm, methodology, and methods. However, first, I provide my positionality statement in the following subsection.

3.1.1 Positionality Statement

Positionality refers to the apparent (but also at times inconspicuous) research influences that arise due to a researcher's position or place as an individual within a wider socio-cultural, economic or political context (Holmes, 2020; Rowe, 2014). A researcher's gender or membership of a religious group, for example, may influence how they conduct research, including how they interact with and select research participants and how participants, in turn, view the researcher and his/her actions and intentions. Therefore, studies that use individuals as data collection instruments often, as a matter of good research practice, seek to include a reflexive consideration of positionality to attempt to highlight such research influences (Cousin, 2010). However, choosing what to include or exclude in such a consideration, I feel, is itself an implicit indication of a researcher's positionality. Accordingly, the following paragraph includes my positionality statement; however, I restrict the level of detail here to aspects I feel are relevant to and influenced my research and its design.

The story of Pranay is this: I grew up in India and moved to Glasgow in 2013. Although my family is Hindu, I believe this is the default for many Indian families and should not be taken to mean that my family (including my grandparents and sister) and I participated in religious activities beyond those that might be viewed as social and cultural festivities. In addition, I attended an all-boys English-speaking Christian Brothers Congregational school until I was seventeen, which might be comparable to a UK grammar school by Indian standards. This was because my parents felt I would receive a better education there compared with the state-run schooling system. Accordingly, I also participated in morning prayer and occasional church-related activities at my school and did not see any intrinsic distinctions between Christian religious practices and Hindu traditions. I often prayed to God, and God kept changing, but I did not think this was abnormal. In addition, my schooling arrangement also meant that I was possibly Westernised to a greater extent than the general Indian population. After finishing school, I had several 'bad episodes' such as heartbreak, rejection, failure, etc. During one of these, YouTube recommended I watch an Alan Watts video about Zen Buddhism. This, I consider to be my foray into contemporary spirituality and religion. Over the years, I read several books by similar authors, such as Jiddu Krishnamurti, Mooji and Thomas Merton, dabbled in contemporary spiritual ideas such as the Law of Attraction, read several Hindu and Buddhist texts, The New Testament, The Old Testament and The Holy Quran, tried chanting and meditation and had a personal spiritual/mystical experience. Although I believed there was some kind of universal spiritual intelligence, I did not consider myself religious. Instead,

whenever I had another bad episode, I would read spirituality-related literature or watch an Alan Watts or Mooji video as I felt it would help me 'rise above' my problems. Thus, doing a PhD examining how and why people sought and used spiritual information in religiously unaffiliated contexts for me felt completely natural, as I felt I understood both the context and the 'insider' vocabulary involved. Coming to the end of my PhD studies, however, I am neither spiritual nor religious; there is no one here. I now continue with my methodological reflections in the following section.

3.2 Paradigm Definition

Regardless of its objectives, most research begins at the philosophical level by defining a particular research community's shared beliefs, values, techniques, or paradigm (Pickard, 2013). This involves stances on the nature of reality (the ontological assumption), the relationship between the knower and the known (the epistemological assumption), and the ability to know or inquire in such a situation (the methodological assumption). According to Pickard, there are three significant paradigms within information research: positivism, interpretivism and postpositivism.

The positivistic paradigm assumes a fixed, independent, stable reality where social phenomena are independent of human observation. Positivism, therefore, views a knower as an objective reporter of external reality and asserts that such a reality can be experimentally known. Positivistic researchers, therefore, quantitatively measure and determine various phenomena by dissecting them into theoretical constructs and variables (Pickard, 2013; Bryman, 2016). In contrast, the interpretive paradigm does not rely on a tangible reality and instead assumes social behaviours, actions and events as multiple, relative and constructed narratives embedded in various contexts (Pickard, 2013). Here, the knower and the known are seen to influence each other, knowledge is contextual, and causes cannot be separated from effects. Interpretivistic researchers, therefore, believe that any data gathered for research arise as a product of the research process and may ultimately say more about the researcher than the phenomena in question; however, as long as the researcher and the phenomena being researched are contextually aligned, interpretive researchers believe they can offer contextual meanings behind various actions, behaviours and events. Accordingly, interactive exchange and hermeneutics form part of the qualitative methodology employed in interpretivistic research (Bryman, 2016). Compared with positivism and interpretivism, postpositivism is a reactionary movement that attempts to compensate for particular positivistic limitations that overlook probability and uncertainty (Pickard, 2013). The postpositivist paradigm assumes that

natural social causes and effects exist; however, it asserts that objectively determining their relationships in all contexts may be impossible. This impossibility, however, is viewed in postpositivist research as an imperfection that should eventually be overcome. Accordingly, postpositivistic researchers believe that although all social scientific discovery is subject to interpretation; still, researchers must demonstrate objectivity by externally validating their findings. Experiments and hypotheses testing, therefore, remain the methodological preference in postpositivistic research; however, non-traditional and mixed-methods approaches are also encouraged, allowing for researcher knowledge and experience to influence the results' perceptions. Each paradigm therefore implies and is associated with particular research methodologies, which may further imply specific research methods, techniques and instruments (Pickard, 2013).

The paradigm in the literature I consulted during the early research stages was typically interpretive but with some postpositivist elements. Most studies I read (especially those concerning informal spiritual and religious interactions) were ontologically relativist—believed in socially and contextually constructed realities, epistemologically transactional or subjectivist—relied on the epistemic products of interactions between the investigator and various subjects, and methodologically empathetic—i.e., interpreted subjective reality constructions qualitatively and case by case (Pickard, 2013). However, several studies also attempted to objectively identify and measure possible variables such as information needs and resource usage. Therefore, although most studies I consulted implicitly accepted that the underlying phenomena (such as actions, views and behaviours) being investigated did not have an independent existence outside of the studies' contexts, many still viewed objectivity as a goal and aimed to demonstrate the validity of their findings through generalisation and transference. Likewise, my paradigmatic view was (and remains) interpretive; moreover, I believed that spiritual and religious views and behaviours, and their effects, could be understood and explained, and these understandings could subsequently be transferred to other contexts. Doing so implied aligning with a qualitative methodological perspective.

3.3 Qualitative Methodology or Strategy

A methodology is the researcher's angle or perspective on the overall objectives and may also be considered the research strategy or orientation (Bryman, 2016, p.32; Pickard, 2013, p. xviii). The paradigm definition usually implies a particular methodology, and I felt a qualitative methodology or strategy was more suitable for examining various motivations, interactions, thoughts, views and

attitudes. In addition, a qualitative strategy, I believed, would enable a richer context-centred enquiry into contemporary spiritual information interactions by providing descriptive details.

Such a methodology should generally begin with a topic selection and literature review; however, unlike a quantitative methodology that would proceed more linearly to gather evidence to support or refute particular hypotheses, a qualitative strategy should aim to *understand* a particular process, phenomenon or situation (Pickard, 2013; Clarke and Braun, 2013). Likewise, my studies aimed to understand individual seekers' motivations and interactions, teachers' and speakers' views about spiritual seeking, and librarians' views regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. However, my research began with three broad study objectives formulated through my literature readings; I, therefore, conducted a formal literature review as an implicit objective after my studies concluded (I will reflect more on this in the following sections). I devised and conducted my studies pragmatically using methods I felt were contextually appropriate. This included using secondary data (online videos) to analyse spiritual retreat residents' motivations and interactions, constructing and analysing descriptions of contemporary spiritual-seeking activities & concerns through interviews with spiritual teachers and speakers, and cataloguing, analysing and interpreting librarians' views about spiritual needs through an adapted web-based spiritual needs questionnaire. The data type for some parts of the third study—questionnaire responses to librarians' self-reported spiritual need prevalence & importance levels, was quantitative. However, I used this data to delineate librarians' views vis-a-vis different spiritual need categories and contextualise their qualitative text-based inputs; therefore, the overall research methodology or strategy applied a qualitative sensibility, i.e., an interest in process and meaning, over and above cause and effect (Clarke and Braun, 2013). I clarify this below by reflecting on each study's methods and limitations and then explaining my general qualitative data analysis technique.

3.3.1 Biographical Methods and Meaning-Making Framework Used in Study One

My first objective (stated in section 3.1) was to understand spiritual retreat residents' motivations and interactions in a contemporary spiritual or religiously unaffiliated context. The context I selected was Monte Sahaja—a contemplative spiritual retreat centre in Portugal. I chose Monte Sahaja as I was familiar with the centre's online content, such as its YouTube talks and recorded contemplative sessions. In addition, I was also briefly a member of its Glasgow/Edinburgh Sangha or informal spiritual group. Moreover, besides this connection, I chose Monte Sahaja as Latham et al. (2020) signalled retreats as fertile grounds for information and library science research (p. 1012).

I used Kari and Hartel's (2007) context-centred approach discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.2, to accomplish my objective, i.e., instead of only examining the retreat residents' *information-seeking* behaviours, I analysed the context more generally to identify various phenomena, including interactions and outcomes. Accordingly, I first refined this objective to focus on the following research questions:

- RQ2 What motivates people to engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?
- RQ3 What information phenomena surround residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre?

I examined the retreat residents' motivations because I felt this would help understand why individuals generally interacted with spiritual information sources outside institutionally affiliated religious contexts. Understanding their motivations, I believed, would also help contextualise their retreat activities and subsequently make it easier to identify the role of information during their interactions. The personal narratives on Monte Sahaja's website were a suitable data source for answering the study questions since they included rich accounts of residents' experiences, motivations and background information regarding the retreat interactions. Moreover, the first-person accounts helped flesh out how residents made meanings of various events and their information interactions before, after and during residence. Such narrative accounts are sometimes deliberately solicited by researchers wishing to understand how people make meaning through narrative construction (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002). However, in this case, the interviewer or the centre's video producer *inadvertently* elicited such narratives by asking the residents to talk about their life stories, what brought them to retreat, and their retreat experiences through a semi-structured interview process. I, therefore, interpreted the residents' narratives as 'spirituality-related meaning-making narratives' (Park, 2013).

3.3.1.1 Meaning-Making, Narrative Construction and Spiritual Reappraisal

In the videos that functioned as my study's data source, the residents first discussed their pre-retreat life experiences and searches for (spiritual) fulfilment. They then linked their searches with various negative, positive and mystical life experiences by constructing a narrative account of spiritual reappraisal and engagements with spiritual information sources. Therefore, their narratives are topic-centred, i.e., they discuss particular life events linked through a shared theme or characteristic rather than a hypothetical or habitual experience (Riessman, 1993). Accordingly,

Baumeister and Vohs (2002) explain that such narratives can be seen as attempts at 'meaning-making'—an active psychological process through which people revise or reappraise an event or series of events through sensemaking and benefit finding (p. 613). Here, Park (2013) emphasises that since religion and spirituality are central to the meaning systems of many people, such sensemaking and benefit finding often involves spiritual reappraisal and may include re-understanding various events as opportunities for coming closer to God or avenues for spiritual growth and wellbeing (Park, 2005). Similarly, Ruthven (2019; 2022) explains that information, such as parables, prayers and stories of religious saints and figures, are often sought for meaning-making and may facilitate spiritual reevaluations and reappraisals (Ruthven, 2019). I shall explain meaning-making and Park's (2013) framework in more detail in Chapter 4: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making; however, for now, it may be sufficient to clarify that Ruthven's indications (2019) and Park's (2013) meaning-making framework, taken together, helped me rationalise the retreat residents' motivations for spiritual information interaction. This rationalisation, I felt, was necessary as it helped relate the residents' spirituality-related motivations with more general motivations in existential and meaningful contexts. Moreover, it allowed me to map my study onto broader research efforts and connect it with discussions of information interactions in other profound and meaning-centred contexts. Having done so, I felt I could examine the role of information in the residents' spirituality-related meaning-making attempts, identify their concerns and information interactions, and judge if my findings could transfer/generalise to other contexts. This also helped me demonstrate the suitability of using meaning-making theory in researching spiritual and religious information contexts. I used a biographical research method—narrative analysis to analyse the videos and attempt to answer my study questions.

3.3.1.2 Biographical Methods and Narrative Analysis

A biography is an account of an individual's life. It may be told/authored by the individual or someone else or result from collaboration; in all cases, it purposively intends to construct a subject's narrative (Bornat, 2008). This narrative can be a life history, autobiography, ethnography or personal narrative. Accordingly, biographical methods aim to understand various social phenomena (e.g., behaviours and interactions) contextually by analysing a biography and viewing the subject as a reliable source of evidence (Bornat, 2008). Narrative analysis—the biographical method I used, involves data such as diary entries, notebooks, videos, weblogs or written personal narratives (Bornat, 2008; Bryman, 2016). These can be directly elicited through interviews or

indirectly generated through archives records or websites (Bornat, 2008). Regardless of the data type and generation method, Bornat (2008) explains that narrative analysis typically focuses on a story's broader 'sum of parts' rather than individual events, atmospheres, environments and relationships described by the subject (p. 348). However, in my case, I employed a broader 'sum of parts' strategy to understand the commonalities between different residents' motivations *and* a finer-grained analysis to identify particular information interactions described in the narratives. Like Bornat (2008), Bryman (2016) suggests that in analysing personal narratives, researchers should seek to shift focus from examining 'what happened?' to 'how people make sense of what happened?' and eventually, as all narratives are purposively constructed, to 'how people make sense of what happened and to what effect?' (p. 589). Likewise, I first used 'meaning-making' to interpret the residents' narrative constructions and understand how they made sense of their experiences. I then identified the role of spiritual information in the retreat activities as retold in their narratives and identified information outcomes, interactions and sources. The narrative videos, however, were data I did not personally collect; this study, therefore, analysed secondary qualitative data, which has inherent limitations but could also provide certain advantages.

3.3.1.3 Secondary Data and Limitations

A limitation of using the website's videos was that the videos were not created for research purposes. Therefore, this study used qualitative data generated through interviews I did not conduct personally. This differs from a 'secondary analysis' because the data I analysed did not pertain to research data previously generated through another qualitative study. Instead, it was data freely available online and created by the subjects or the retreat centre's production team. By discussing this as a limitation, I do not mean that the residents may have been insincere in their narratives; but that the narratives did not discuss other pertinent information research topics, such as how residents identified and evaluated various information sources. In addition, since I did not conduct the interviews, I could not personally verify my interpretations of the residents' narratives, for example, by asking the subjects if they considered their retreat activities, such as meditation and silent contemplation, informative. The advantage of using secondary data, however, was that the interviews were conducted by an insider in an environment of mutual trust and respect, possibly leading to the residents sharing vulnerable details about their lives in a way that an outsider interviewer may not have managed.

3.3.2 Qualitative Interviewing and Seekership Theory Used in Study Two

My second objective was to construct and analyse descriptions of spiritual seeking through interviews with contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers. As section 3.1 explained, I formulated this objective as several retreat residents (in study one) referred to their activities as 'searches'. In addition, my literature readings indicated spiritual seeking or Seekership as a popular but under-theorised mode of contemporary spiritual engagement (e.g., Sutcliffe, 2016). The term spiritual seeking was not new to me as I often encountered it in contemporary spiritual discourse; however, I had not considered viewing it as an information-related problem before. Therefore, I conducted semi-structured interviews with spiritual teachers and speakers to learn more about the phenomenon. I felt such interviews could provide rich data about people's general spiritual-seeking activities and concerns in contemporary spiritual contexts. To do so, I refined my objective into the following research questions:

- RQ4 How do contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers explain spiritual seeking?
- RQ5 What are the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking?

The first question aimed to understand *how* spiritual teachers and speakers explained spiritual seeking. This was because, besides gleaning general insights into the concerns of spiritual seekers, I was also interested in examining how my participants qualitatively viewed contemporary spiritual-seeking interactions. For example, I was interested to see if they considered spiritual seeking as a cognitive or emotional process or perhaps something else. In addition, understanding their views about spiritual seeking in this way helped investigate if spiritual seeking had similarities or differences when compared with other information interactions. The semi-structured interviews were particularly effective here, allowing me to probe the participants for more details when needed. Interviewing is sometimes viewed as a data collection technique employed within a broader research method rather than a method by itself (e.g., Pickard, 2013; also Charmaz, 2014); however, 'qualitative interviewing'—the research method I used for this study, refers to a constructionist approach whereby data for the study are generated through conversations between the researcher and various participants (Warren, 2001). Such interviewing also forms part of constructivist grounded theory methods and analyses; however, grounded theory methods also emphasise simultaneous data collection and analysis to construct data in subsequent interviews based on knowledge gaps created by previous interactions (Charmaz, 2014). I did not do this. Instead, I conducted all my interviews within two weeks and then analysed all my transcripts. The

term *constructionist* here also helps emphasise that the participants' descriptions I analysed were interpretively constructed through the interview process and did not objectively exist before it. Accordingly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers to qualitatively construct descriptions of spiritual seeking and identify spiritual seekers' concerns and practices; I shall provide details about the study's participants, how I sampled them and my interview technique and questions in Chapter 5. However, here I reflect on my rationale for using the qualitative interviewing method and the limitations of using teachers and speakers as participants. First, I briefly refer to spiritual seeking as understood in sociology and contemporary religion to provide context.

3.3.2.1 Qualitative Interviewing and Seekership

Sutcliffe (2016) highlights that spirituality for many people in contemporary Western society could be viewed as a search amongst multiple religious traditions and sources. Similarly, Houtman and Aupers (2007) point out that spiritual or religious seeking is prominent in post-traditional Western societies. Moreover, Campbell (in Swatos, 1998) previously explained that many spiritual individuals were potential 'seekers' likely to see some truth in all religious alternatives while regarding the movement from one tradition or practice to the next as spiritual growth or advancement (Swatos, 1998 Encyclopedia of Religion and Society). Accordingly, contemporary spiritual interactions for many people might be viewed as attempts to choose a personal spirituality by seeking alternatives among multiple religious options. Chapter 5: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking shall introduce and discuss this social phenomenon, known as Seekership or spiritual seeking, in more detail; however, here, I clarify that viewing contemporary spiritual information interactions in this way provided me with an alternative to psychological 'meaning-making' and helped me further understand the characteristics of interactions in contemporary spiritual contexts. Qualitative interviewing, I felt, was suitable here as it allowed a sensitive approach to data elicitation that could be empathetic to the personal nature of spiritual and religious conversations whilst enabling detailed descriptions to explore these conceptually underexamined informational contexts. I could conduct the interviews remotely over Zoom to include participants from various European and North American countries, which was particularly useful during the Covid-19 travel restrictions. In addition, using myself as the data instrument, my positionality as spiritual but not traditionally religious could help build rapport with the study participants. Moreover, my knowledge of spirituality-related vocabulary and concepts could elicit more animated and pertinent

responses. As section 3.1 explained, qualitatively interviewing spiritual teachers and speakers rather than individual seekers was my choice and one that I stand by; however, this choice also had certain limitations when attempting to understand individual spirituality-related information practices.

3.3.2.2 Limitations of Using Teachers & Speakers as Study Participants

Although spiritual teachers and speakers could provide rich contextual details about contemporary spiritual-seeking concerns and activities more broadly, they could only provide third-person accounts of individuals' spiritual information practices and experiences. The personal narratives I analysed in study one could have perhaps compensated for this; however, those, too, were limited to retreat-related information experiences and interactions. Therefore, studies one and two were limited to contextual understandings of contemporary spiritual concerns, outcomes and interactions.

3.3.3 Questionnaire Methods and Spiritual Needs Questionnaire used in Study Three

As discussed in Section 3.1, my preliminary literature readings signalled a gap in the literature concerning librarians' views on spirituality-related needs and expectations with no prior study of this nature[10]. Accordingly, objective three related to gathering and understanding practising librarians' attitudes and perceptions regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. I placed this as my third objective despite it being the first one I attempted chronologically, as my initial attempt at investigating librarians' attitudes confused interpretive analysis with positivist decision-making claims. To explain, I gathered practising librarians' opinions regarding the prevalence and importance of twenty-seven spiritual needs using an adapted web-based version of Galek et al.'s (2005) popular nursing and healthcare-based spiritual needs questionnaire. I provided closed-ended input options for the spiritual need prevalence and importance questions. In addition, I asked my respondents for personal thoughts and views about considering spiritual needs in library provision through open-ended text-based response options. However, after collecting my data, i.e. librarians' subjective interpretations of patrons' spirituality-related needs and expectations, I mistook it as evidence for measuring the prevalence of spiritual needs in modern library spaces. In addition, I analysed my text-based data in the first instance by viewing my

[10] Mross and Riehman-Murphy (2018; 2019; 2021) examined the prevalence of prayer-related practices but did not investigate spirituality-related needs more broadly. In addition, Lenstra (2017) examined the popularity of yoga-related library programs, but this was in secular physical activity contexts rather than religious and spiritual ones.

respondents as informants rather than subjects. Accordingly, after discussing my results with my supervisor and realising my misunderstandings, I returned to my collected data and reanalysed it with an interpretive lens to examine the following research questions:

- RQ6 What are librarians' views regarding spiritual needs?
- RQ7 What place (if any) do librarians feel spiritual needs have in modern library provision?

In doing so, I examined the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts by understanding librarians' views and triangulating them with spiritual individuals, teachers and speakers as part of the information seeker, information facilitator and information provider tripartite approach outlined in Section 3.1. In the following subsection, I reflect on my rationale for using questionnaires and my selection of Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs questionnaire tool.

3.3.3.1 Questionnaire Use and Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Questionnaire

Pickard (2013) notes that questionnaires are the most popular data generation tools used when working with human subjects. Moreover, Bryman (2016) highlights several advantages of using self-administered questionnaires compared with structured interviews. Firstly, questionnaires, especially web-based ones, are cheaper and quicker to administer; second, a web-based questionnaire can provide anonymity and possibly limit undesirable interviewer-related effects; and third, questionnaires are convenient for respondents as they can be taken at the respondents' chosen time and pace (Bryman, 2016). However, more specifically, since librarians are often busy professionals typically handling more than one role in a larger organisation, using a questionnaire helped me increase my potential responses by allowing for a less demanding participation channel. Accordingly, since, realistically speaking, I would only be allowed one attempt at data collection, I used Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey Questionnaire to have a better-validated and robust data-gathering tool. Chapter 6: Spiritual Needs and Modern Librarianship shall explain the concept of spiritual needs and Galek et al.'s (2005) questionnaire in detail; however, succinctly stated, the questionnaire consists of twenty-nine spiritual needs commonly identified in nursing and healthcare disciplines categorised into love, belonging and respect; divine; positivity, gratitude, hope and peace; meaning and purpose; morality and ethics; appreciation of beauty; and death and resolution constructs (see Fig. D for a snapshot of Galek et al.'s (2005) need-construct categorisation).

Construct	Item
Love/belonging/ respect	To be accepted as a person
	To give/receive love
	To feel a sense of connection with the world
	For companionship
	For compassion and kindness
	For respectful care of your bodily needs
Divine	To participate in religious or spiritual services
	To have someone pray with or for you
	To perform religious or spiritual rituals
	To read spiritual or religious material
	For guidance from a higher power
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To feel hopeful
	To feel a sense of peace and contentment
	To keep a positive outlook
	To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect
	To be thankful or grateful
	To experience laughter and a sense of humor
Meaning and purpose	To find meaning in suffering
	To find meaning and purpose in life
	To understand why you have a medical problem
Morality and ethics	To live an ethical and moral life
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate beauty
	To experience or appreciate music
	To experience or appreciate nature
Resolution/death	To address unmet issues before death
	To address concerns about life after death
	To have a deeper understanding of death and dying
	To forgive yourself and others
	To review your life

Figure D: Spiritual Needs and Constructs in Galek et al.'s Spiritual Needs Questionnaire (2005)

In adapting the questionnaire for my study, I reduced the twenty-nine needs to twenty-seven by excluding two needs: 'to understand why you have a medical problem' and 'for guidance from a higher power', as these were specific to a medical context or were implicit in other needs (e.g., to pray). Following this, I reworded each need to represent it in the third person and provided respondents with a text-based input box to ask for their thoughts and opinions. I shall explain my

adapted questionnaire in detail in Section 6.3.2; however, I reflect on some limitations of using questionnaires as a method in the following subsection.

3.3.3.2 Limitations of Questionnaire Methods

The questionnaire method used in Study Three allowed me to collect data from numerous librarians; however, in doing so, the data generated was less detailed compared with other methods, such as data from interviews or focus groups. By design, I attempted to compensate for this by using inputs from the closed-ended questions' responses. Notwithstanding this, the data I generated and analysed only allowed for an exploratory investigation rather than an in-depth consideration of individual librarians' thought processes. Therefore, Study Three may benefit from further investigations using more intimate research methods such as qualitative interviews. In the following section, I continue my reflections by explaining the literature review method used in Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion.

3.3.4 Literature Review Method Used in Chapter 2

My research studies began with three broad objectives formulated through my literature readings between 2019-2023, as specified in section 3.1. During this time, I examined hundreds of articles and research papers from information and library science journals and psychology, sociology, spirituality, and religion-related disciplines to inform my interpretivistic investigations. However, after my studies concluded, I conducted a formalised literature review to consolidate current understandings, highlight future research prospects and understand how my findings fit with existing information research in spiritual and religious contexts. This implicitly functioned as a fourth objective for my thesis. To carry forward with this objective, I first refined it to investigate the following research question:

- RQ1 How have scholars explored religion and spirituality within information research, and what are the gaps in the current literature?

I chose this question as, in addition to reviewing research findings, I also wanted to examine *how*, i.e., in what contexts and using which methods, information scholars had generally explored religious and spiritual information interactions. Moreover, I included the literature on 'spirituality *and* religion' to understand if scholarly research reflected broader societal trends that sometimes distinguished between the spiritual and religious.

My studies were primarily situated in and conducted to inform information and library science research; however, information studies can also pertain to wider knowledge-related institutions like galleries, archives and museums. Moreover, like education, communication and journalism, information research is an orthogonal field that cuts across conventional boundaries to investigate information-related phenomena in various disciplines (Bates, 2007). Therefore, I also sought to examine how my findings related to those from information-related research in other fields, e.g., the sociology of religion. Therefore, I crafted keywords that could capture intersections between information, spirituality and religion but also confine the retrieved literature to an information-related perspective. The precise keywords I used to do this have already been discussed in Chapter 2; here, I reflect on my keyword choices and the limitations of my narrative review method.

3.3.4.1 Keyword Choice and Reflection on Narrative Review Method

A narrative review is a traditional review where the researcher provides an account of what is already known about an area of interest (Bryman, 2016). According to Bryman (2016), such reviews can serve as a contextual prelude for a research's work or function as stand-alone reviews in and of themselves (p. 91). My narrative review (presented as Chapter 2 of this thesis) served both these functions, i.e., in addition to reviewing studies that would provide context, it also aimed to consolidate understandings from existing information research about the spiritual and religious. As such, it helps justify my research objectives and questions *and* is one of this thesis's original contributions. Since narrative reviews can sometimes appear haphazard compared with systematic reviews, I included the explicit keywords and literature search systems I used to help increase the reproducibility of search results and the rigour of my narrative-style discussions.

My keyword choice was deliberately generic. I used the broad term information to attempt to encompass several aspects, such as behaviours, needs, interactions, etc., as these are often preceded by the term 'information'. Moreover, I included colloquial replacements for information such as 'online', 'internet' and 'document'. I believed these keywords would relate to most information research literature on spirituality and religion; however, I still found studies cited in various papers uncaptured by these keywords (I included these in my review). Therefore, my review is reproducible using the supplied keywords and search systems; however, it is limited to my keyword choice and current understanding of information, religion and spirituality-related terms. Nevertheless, my

review is possibly the only one to examine spirituality *and* religion-related information research since Kari's (2007) Review of The Spiritual in Information Studies excluded religion from its focus.

3.3.5 Other Possible Qualitative Research Methods

Besides the methods I discussed in earlier sections, this thesis could have perhaps used ethnographic and phenomenological methods to understand individuals' motivations, experiences and concerns and the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. In addition, I could have perhaps used qualitative interviewing to construct librarians' understandings of spirituality and related needs interpretively. I discuss some reasons why I opted not to use these methods below.

3.3.5.1 Ethnographic Methods for Researching Residents' Motivations and Interactions

I could have used ethnographic methods to research the motivations and interactions of Monte Sahaja's residents. Ethnography is a kind of fieldwork that intends to gather empirical data about a particular social or cultural group through observation and contextual immersion (Van Maanen, 2011). Gathering data about the residents' motivations and interactions using ethnographic methods, I think, was methodologically appropriate; however, as I was conducting my PhD studies during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, conducting an ethnographic study was not a feasible option. As an alternative, I felt biographical methods, such as narrative interviews or analyses, provided sufficiently detailed and valuable accounts for understanding individuals' experiences in a currently underexplored contemporary spiritual domain. In addition, although using secondary data had limitations (discussed earlier), it was a viable option during physical distancing measures.

3.3.5.2 Phenomenological Methods for Understanding Spiritual Seeking Concerns

As reflected on in section 3.1, interviewing individual spiritual seekers to understand and interpret their concerns as part of a phenomenological study was perhaps an option. However, doing so, I felt, would lead to additional personal narrative-style data, which may not have been conducive to gaining an overall picture. In addition, phenomenology is generally understood as the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Smith, 2018). Accordingly, phenomenological methods emphasise *lived* experiences to understand how individuals interpret their lifeworld in a wider social context. Since individual interpretations may differ, the qualifier 'lived' also intends to emphasise *credible* experiences to understand a particular

phenomenon or process (Paul, 2022). Such emphasis on credibility in phenomenologist axiology was why I felt that phenomenological methods, in my case, were not required. To explain, although I believed that contemporary spiritual-seeking concerns and interactions needed to be examined in a relevant context, I did not feel that individual seekers' perspectives were more or less qualified than teachers' and speakers'. Therefore, when interviewing spiritual teachers and speakers, although my participants needed to be relevant and authoritative data sources themselves, I did not feel their positionalities vis-a-vis being teachers rather than seekers frustrated my study's overall purpose. Instead, it allowed for a more general and, in my opinion, equally appropriate method for understanding contemporary spiritual-seeking concerns.

3.3.5.3 Qualitative Interviewing to Construct and Understand Librarians' Views

Like spiritual teachers and speakers, I could have interviewed individual librarians or perhaps even conducted focus groups to understand their views about spirituality and related needs in modern library provision. However, unlike spiritual teachers and speakers, I could not purposively sample individual librarians to speak about spiritual and religious topics and issues straightforwardly. Moreover, most practising librarians in the US and UK were on leave or working from home when I conducted my study (due to Covid-related lockdowns); as a result, many did not have access to their emails or video conference capabilities in the early stages of physical restrictions. Finally, qualitative interviewing inherently would not allow for the complete anonymity of the participants, as I would have to speak to each librarian personally. This would have impacted my study, and I felt it might interfere with librarians' abilities to speak openly about spirituality and religion. Therefore, I opted to conduct a web-based questionnaire study that would allow librarians with internet access to participate anonymously.

3.3.5.4 Table Summarising Timeline and Methods for Literature Review and Studies One, Two and Three

Task	**Related objectives and research questions**	**Data collection period**	**Data analysis period**	**Data collection method+ instruments**	**Participant/subject numbers and selection criteria**	**Data type analysed and number of items**
Formal Lit Review	Implicit objective, Research question 1	01 Dec 2022 to 01 January 2023	01 Dec 2022 to 31 March 2023	Google Scholar, Searched and collated by myself	200 research papers, selected based on keywords and topic relevance	115 peer-reviewed articles, 44 book chapters, 24 theses and 17 unrefereed papers

Task	Related objectives and research questions	Data collection period	Data analysis period	Data collection method+ instruments	Participant/subject numbers and selection criteria	Data type analysed and number of items
Study One	Objective 1, Research questions 2 and 3	Exploratory attempt: 08 July 2020 to 31 Jul 2020, Actual attempt: 01 Sept 2021 to 04 Sept 2021	20 Sept 2021 to 30 Jan 2022	Online videos, downloaded from the retreat centre's website by myself	15 retreat residents, selected purposively according to residency status at the retreat centre	15 video transcripts, average transcript length of 1664 words
Study Two	Objective 2, Research questions 4 and 5	01 Feb 2022 to 15 Feb 2022	16 Feb 2022 to 30 June 2022	Zoom interviews with participants, conducted by myself	13 spiritual teachers and speakers, selected purposively according to expertise and experience	13 interview transcripts, average transcript length of 6434 words
Study Three	Objective 3, Research questions 6 and 7	01 March 2021 to 30 April 2021	01 May 2021 to 31 Dec 2021	Web-based Qualtrics questionnaire, disseminated by myself through popular library email lists	281 participants, selected as they self-identified as practising librarians	126 open-ended and 146 closed-ended survey responses, with open-ended ones being 74 words each, on average

Table 0: Research Timeline and Methods for Lit Review and Studies One, Two and Three

3.4 General Data Analysis Technique

Bryman (2016) explains that unlike quantitative data analyses, which have unambiguous rules about data handling once collected, qualitative analyses do not have clear stipulations and generally rely on broad guidelines for working with media, such as field notes, documents and interview transcripts (p. 570). In my investigations, I worked with three types of qualitative data: retreat residents' narratives, spiritual teachers' and speakers' interview transcripts and librarians' open-ended questionnaire responses. The first two data sets included rich data about participants'/subjects' experiences, motivations, insights and descriptions. The third dataset, i.e., librarians' open-ended questionnaire responses, was relatively less detailed; and included personal opinions, thoughts and anecdotes of librarian-patron interactions. In Pickard's (2013) opinion, such less-detailed data should not qualify for a traditionally-understood qualitative analysis, as it does

not provide the level of detail necessary for theorising. However, in this case, I aimed to catalogue and understand librarians' attitudes and perceptions regarding spirituality and related needs and not to develop a nuanced theory using them. I could have analysed these responses using a quantitative-type content analysis by looking for word frequencies and sentiments. However, as emphasised earlier in section 3.3.3, this was possibly the first study of its kind when I started. I, therefore, wanted to understand how librarians felt about spirituality in general, and I supplemented the lack of rich-textual data with librarians' perceived spiritual need importance and prevalence views. Regardless of the data elicitation method, Bryman (2016) explains that most qualitative analyses typically search for patterns or themes. Accordingly, I thematically analysed my qualitative data in all three studies. Specific details of each study's data analysis procedures are provided later in Chapters 4, 5 and 6; however, I discuss my general qualitative data analysis technique in this section. To do so, I first explain Braun and Clarke's updated (2019) six-step suggestions I used for conducting a reflexive thematic analysis. These suggestions are:

1. Familiarise yourself with the data and identify items of interest
2. Generate initial codes
3. Generate (initial) themes
4. Review potential themes
5. Define and name themes
6. Produce the report

In their 2006 paper which the 2019 one builds upon, Braun and Clarke defined thematic analysis as 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). They viewed the method as theoretically flexible and explained that thematic analysis might be conducted in different ways or orientations, ranging from inductive or bottom-up approaches to deductive or top-down ones. In addition, their (2006) paper expresses that researchers may choose between an experiential orientation or a critical data orientation and rely on essential/realist or constructionist perspectives. In practice, however, they explain that most analyses will sit somewhere between two orientations and perspectives; the paper, therefore, suggests viewing these as being on a continuum rather than binary positions. Likewise, I used inductive approaches when analysing residents' narratives and teachers' and speakers' interview transcripts. However, when analysing librarians' responses in Study Three, I used Galek et al.'s spiritual needs constructs (discussed in Section 3.3.3.1) as an effective codebook for interpreting my

respondents' closed-ended responses. I adopted an interpretivistic perspective and an experiential orientation when analysing the residents' narratives, spiritual teachers' and speakers' interview transcripts and librarians' open-ended responses. Simply put, I analysed my data by viewing each account or response as a subjective narrative and did not seek to critique or judge how these intersected with wider social, economic or power-related dynamics.

To familiarise myself with the data, I first analysed each narrative and interview transcript (in Studies One and Two) by looking for relationships between my study's research questions and the questions the data *effectively* addressed. For instance, I tagged statements such as "What brought me here …" with the question: 'Why did residents engage in retreat' in Study One, and "I think there's a drive for …" with: 'What questions do spiritual seekers have' in Study Two. This was necessary as the data in Studies One and Two were generated through semi-structured processes; thus, the subjects'/participants' responses often answered similar but approximate questions that were not the same as the original interview questions. I refer to these as analysing questions when explaining details in Chapters 4 and 5.

Next, I interpreted subjects'/participants' responses to the analysing questions to generate initial codes; for example, by labelling sentences such as "my sister died…" with the codes 'personal loss' and 'sadness'. Moreover, I assigned multiple codes to the same or, at times, groups of connected sentences to generate clusters of codes that adequately represented each transcript. The codes I produced at this stage related only to a particular narrative or interview transcript. However, following this, I generated initial themes by looking for similarities in the codes cross-comparatively between several narratives or transcripts. For instance, I grouped the codes sadness, happiness, dissatisfaction or unfulfillment in various transcripts in Study One and Study Two into the broader theme of 'Affect'. This technique is a feature of Strauss's (1987) constant comparative qualitative analysis technique and, besides thematic analysis, also appears in various grounded theory methods of analysis (Charmaz, 2014).

Braun and Clark (2006) characterise a theme as a cluster of categorised (or coded) data 'represent[ing] some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset' (p. 82). However, they explain that a 'theme' isn't only that which receives equal attention from many different data sources and emphasise that researcher judgement is crucial in determining theme significance. Braun & Clarke's initial guidance on this is that the significance of a theme must be determined by its relationship to the research questions and not its ubiquity within a given dataset. I, therefore,

reviewed my initial themes by understanding their relationships with the analysing *and* research questions. Having done so, I then generated final themes and descriptions using excerpts from various transcripts and my commentaries and discussions about them (I provide the final theme names and example statements in Chapters 4, 5). I derived final theme names in study two predominantly using explicit statements from various participants, and in study one, I used my subjective interpretations and broader understanding of the context.

When analysing the data in Study Three, I first catalogued responses to the closed-ended questions according to Galek et al.'s (2005) constructs described in Section 3.3.3.1. Next, I coded each text-based response initially by looking for relationships between the respondents' words and wider meanings and understandings the respondents ascribed to them. For instance, I coded the statement "I am unsure… that being said, I feel librarians need to be cautious…" with the label 'Treading Cautiously' and 'Setting Boundaries'. Following this, I again used cross-comparison to identify codes common amongst several responses and generated themes by comparing initial codes with my research questions (I provide the final themes and associated excerpt examples in Chapter 6). Here, however, I generated semantic rather than latent themes as Study Three's data was relatively less rich and detailed compared to Studies One and Two.

Besides my independent analysis, my supervisor helped check the validity and appropriateness of codes and themes for all three studies by carefully reading my drafts and providing detailed feedback during analysis and writeup. In addition, I shared Study Three's initial codes with Dr Rebekah Wilson (McGill University, Canada) in June 2021, who was briefly my secondary supervisor and provided me with feedback that improved my general coding and analysis process (see Section 3.3.5.4 again for a timeline of the research process). In the following section, I reflect upon my research's ethics-related issues and considerations.

3.5 Ethics Considerations and Issues

I sought and gained ethics approval for Studies Two and Three before commencing data collection work, as these involved collecting data from human subjects or individuals. The University of Strathclyde's Computer and Information Sciences Departmental Ethics Committee granted ethics approval for these, which can be reviewed by quoting application id 1702 for Study Two and 1316 for Study Three. Study One did not require formal ethics approval; however, I considered its ethical implications the same way as the other two. I elaborate on this as follows:

As discussed in Section 3.3.2, I collected data for Study Two by interviewing contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers remotely over Zoom. When collecting data from groups or individuals, the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics suggests that researchers should pay attention to the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities; scientific integrity; social responsibility; and maximising benefits and minimising harm (British Psychological Society, 2021). Typical ethics-related considerations, therefore, include informed consent, confidentiality, data sharing, and protection. However, qualitative researchers, such as myself, often have a pronounced interest in people's words and their contextual meanings, which means that besides the typical considerations made before, after and during interviews, risks such as those of greater-than-intended disclosures and unexpected impacts of (mis)contextualising must also be considered during and after analysis and before publication (Steffan, 2021). Accordingly, I considered and explained how I would ethically contact and recruit participants, ask for and record their consent, introduce my study and associated interview questions and handle, share and protect my participants' data and transcripts as part of my department's ethics application and approval procedure (please see supplementary materials for the participant information sheet used for Study Two). Following this, I involved my PhD supervisor–someone who was part of the research but did not conduct the interviews or interact with participants–to help check if my anonymised transcriptions, analysis and write-up inadvertently disclosed participants' private information or misrepresented their words. I then prepared character descriptions for each participant but amended these in consultation with my supervisor before publishing, as I realised that my initial descriptions unintentionally provided details that potentially allowed participants to be identified through a web search or social media triangulation (I provide these character descriptions along with further details of how I considered ethics while interviewing in Chapter Five: Study Two–Contemporary Spiritual Seeking).

For Study Three, I collected data using a web-based Qualtrics questionnaire (see Section 3.3.3 earlier). Here, the ethics-related considerations and approval procedures were similar to Study Two's; however, the structure afforded by a web-based questionnaire allowed greater predictability of outcomes compared with Zoom interviews. Notwithstanding this, I carefully considered what to ask participants when designing the questionnaire questions and decided not to include demographic questions and details that could make the questionnaire unnecessarily convoluted. To explain, recording participants' age, gender, ethnicity, or professional education level could have allowed me to examine trends between different demographics; however, this was not the aim of

my study. Moreover, doing so using a self-administered web-based questionnaire, I felt, could potentially generate problematic speculations rather than offer precise insights or understanding. In addition, I chose not to record participants' locations using their IP addresses but instead asked them to self-identify countries they had worked in, as the former required additional consent as per GDPR, making the participation process longer and tedious. Like Study Two, I provided participants in Study Three with an information sheet explaining my study, its purpose and the data handling and use procedures (please see supplementary materials).

Study One did not require formal ethics approval as the data I used was from the retreat centre's website and freely available (see Section 3.3.1); however, considerations vis-a-vis autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities; scientific integrity; social responsibility; and maximising benefits and minimising harm still held. In this case (i.e., for internet-mediated research), researchers often make ethics-related considerations by examining the existing methodological literature and the fundamental principles of research ethics (British Psychological Society, 2021). Accordingly, I first considered the manner and context in which the website's videos were provided. To explain: I considered whether the videos were intended for a public audience or shared amongst a selective paywalled or login-restricted platform (such as a private group or forum). Next, I considered the extent to which my analysis of the videos and subsequent publication of findings might undermine the website administrators', retreat centre team, and retreat residents' reasonable privacy expectations. Finally, I considered whether using and analysing the videos would infringe on copyright or potentially harm the retreat centre and residents monetarily or in credibility-related terms. Ultimately, I used the website's videos in my research as I believed doing so did not breach these conditions.

3.6 Conclusion and Prelude to Part Two

This chapter provided a reflexive account of my thesis' general research design. Part Two shall now present three interpretivistic investigations conducted in accordance with the tripartite approach outlined in Section 3.1. Each investigation relates to particular objectives and questions explained in Section 3.3. Moreover, I shall present each investigation with the necessary background and method-related details in individual chapters. Part Two begins with Chapter 4: Study One-Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making.

Part Two

Study One: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making

Study Two: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking

Study Three: Spiritual Needs and Librarianship in the West

4 Study One: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making

To contribute to the thesis aim stated in Section 0.1, this chapter explores fifteen spiritual retreat residents' interactions and experiences at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre. The chapter begins with an introduction and background, which helps clarify the study's theoretical perspective and explain the retreat centre's features and dynamics. Following this, subsequent sections explain the study's data collection and analysis technique, provide the findings and discussion, and link to the subsequent chapter.

4.1 Study Introduction

Chapter 2: A Review of The Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research highlights that we understand professionals' interactions much better than lay spiritual and religious individuals. In addition, we understand interactions in religiously affiliated contexts better than unaffiliated ones. Accordingly, this study explores fifteen spiritual retreat residents' experiences, motivations and interactions as they discuss their lives before and after residing at Monte Sahaja—a contemplative spiritual retreat centre in Portugal. The study uses narrative analysis, specifically the analysis of online videos in which people reflect on their lives after residing at the retreat centre. I interpret the interviews through Park's (2013) spirituality-related meaning-making framework and use Kari and Hartel's suggested context-centric model to identify the information phenomena at the contemplative spiritual retreat centre. The study's findings: (1) emphasise that retreat residents engage with spiritual information as a result of a change in worldview, significant events, mystical glimpses, and to pursue spiritual knowledge; (2) deliver an account of the sources and kinds of spiritual information used by the residents; (3) provide insights into how residents interact with spiritual information during the contemplative spiritual retreat; (4) indicate that residents seek spiritual information primarily for affective outcomes; 5) demonstrate meaning-making as a helpful mode for interpreting spiritual and religious information interaction.

4.2 Study Background

Spirituality has various understandings; however, several contemporary conceptualisations of spirituality include an element of personal meaning and life purpose. For example, Elizabeth Gilbert's famous memoir, Eat Pray Love, tells the story of an educated woman with a husband, home and successful writing career who, after a difficult divorce, embarks upon a journey to enjoy

life, find her spirituality and seek a balance between the two (Gilbert, 2007). Likewise, in the sciences, the Royal College of Psychiatrists explains that spirituality for many people is associated with fundamental or ultimate importance and thus manifests as a concern with meaning, purpose, truth, and values (Cook, 2013, p.4). In healthcare, the UK National Health Service states that spirituality gives individuals meaning and life purpose (NHSinform, UK). Moreover, nursing disciplines relate spirituality to constructs such as love, belonging, respect; meaning and purpose; positivity, gratitude, hope, peace; morality and ethics; the divine; and resolution and death (Galek et al., 2005; Swinton and Pattison, 2010). However, ideas such as spiritual awakening, enlightenment, spiritual realisation, and higher consciousness also seem to link spirituality with the attainment of some form of knowledge or wisdom. As discussed in Section 2.1, Kari (2007) was the first to identify and review various spiritual information sources and processes in this relation. Consequently, he defined spiritual information as information that may be reckoned holy; be acquired through spiritual means; originate from a spiritual entity; or be on the topic of spiritual matters (Kari, 2007, p. 957). His review inspired several subsequent investigations; for example, Siracky (2013) analysed Catholic university students' journalling practices; Guzik (2018) explored the religious conversion experiences of Toronto Muslims; and Chabot (2019) studied the spiritual and religious practices of Western Buddhists (for details, see Section 2.3.2.2). However, as spiritual information interactions might also occur outside established religious traditions (see Section 0.1, Thesis Introduction), we must further attempt to understand how individuals seek and use spiritual information, especially outside religiously affiliated contexts and settings. Park's (2013) spirituality-related meaning-making framework may help interpret motivations and interactions in these settings.

Generally speaking, 'meaning' is related to needs such as those for a sense of value, purpose, efficacy and self-worth (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002; Ruthven, 2019). Here, Baumeister and Vohs (2002) explain that spirituality and religion are common modes through which people aim to fulfil such needs and expectations (p. 611; also Oman, 2013). Accordingly, they define meaning-making as an active process in which people use sensemaking and benefit-finding to reevaluate their experiences and thus create a better sense of meaning and coherence (p. 613). Similarly, Park's (2013) paper proposes that spirituality and associated behaviours may be meaning-making attempts and that people's sense of meaning may include global and situational elements. Park asserts that spirituality and religion typically stand for people's global meaning structures and that spiritual behaviours might help create situational meaning by using spiritual appraisal for benefit-finding and sensemaking. Therefore, Park's and Baumeister and Vohs' theoretical conceptualisations can

help understand contemporary spiritual information interactions, such as those at a contemplative spiritual retreat. Accordingly, this study uses meaning-making theory and a context-centred approach to attempt to answer the following research questions:

- RQ2 What motivates people to engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?
- RQ3 What information phenomena surround residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre?

The following subsection briefly introduces Monte Sahaja—the study's religiously unaffiliated setting and context.

4.2.1 Introducing Monte Sahaja: A Contemplative Spiritual Retreat Centre in Portugal

Monte Sahaja[11] is a contemplative spiritual retreat centre in Portugal that offers silent retreats and contemplative experiences guided by a Guru or teacher. The centre describes itself as a 'modern-day monastery for mature seekers' and, in addition to guest stays and residencies, offers online spiritual talks, contemplative videos, and online retreats through its website and YouTube channel. The centre does not formally relate to or endorse any particular religion; however, the residents share beliefs and practices typical of Eastern traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The centre's website shares video interviews of some residents and guests who talk about their life experiences, understandings of the retreat, and motivations. These videos provide an opportunity to understand the role of spiritual information in a contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated context. I now explain my study's data collection and analysis technique in the following section.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis Technique

In this study, I used narrative analysis (Bornat, 2008; Bryman, 2016), specifically the analysis of online video interviews in which people reflected on their lives after taking residence at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre. I was familiar with Monte Sahaja through interactions with the centre's online sessions and found inspiration for this study in video interviews placed on its website.

[11] https://mooji.org/monte-sahaja

The centre's website[12] has 56 video interviews which the centre's team has uploaded to share people's life stories and experiences of residing at the retreat centre. I filtered these through purposive sampling to include videos of only those labelled as residents (as opposed to guests), as these were longer interviews and more detailed. These residents are Gurudas, Nirmala, Shivam, Gayatri, Thor, Nirmal, Amara, Mukti Ziegler, Namdev, Bholenath, Lakshmi, Siddhartha, Govinda, Shiv Shankar and Mahima[13]. In addition to being residents at the centre, eleven of them perform various duties, such as reception coordinator, AV editing coordinator, kitchen manager, safety and guidance manager and personal assistant. In addition, Mooji is the resident teacher or Guru at the centre (I did not analyse his video).

On average, the 15 video interviews are 10.5 minutes long and are semi-structured. First, they elicit meaning-making narratives with questions such as What brought you to Monte Sahaja? What was your journey like? How was your first retreat with Mooji? Can you talk a bit more about the guidance you have received here? In addition to these questions, the interviews elicit reflections on people's interpersonal relationships and transformations with questions such as How has Satsang[14] impacted your relationships? and What changes have you experienced in your life since following Mooji's guidance?. I transcribed and prepared these video interviews for analysis (see Supplementary Materials for a complete list of interview questions). For each personal narrative, I used meaning-making (Park, 2013) as a lens to interpret why people engaged with spiritual information. Furthermore, I used a context-centric approach suggested by Kari and Hartel (2007) to identify the information phenomena at the retreat centre. I explored each narrative by looking for answers to the following analysing questions:

- Why did the residents engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?
- What were the sources and kinds of spiritual information at the retreat centre?
- How did the residents interact with spiritual information?
- What were the outcomes of the interactions?

I determined these questions by identifying relationships between the residents' narratives and my study's research questions. The first analysing question was straightforwardly related to residents'

[12] https://mooji.org/voices-from-satsang

[13] Most of these are names the residents have taken up after residing at the centre.

[14] This is a type of contemplative retreat activity. I provide details in Section 4.5.3.1

motivations (i.e. RQ2), and the remaining three related to identifying various information phenomena at the retreat centre (RQ3).

4.4 Study Limitations

This study analysed secondary qualitative data that had not been collected for research purposes. Since I did not conduct the interviews presented in the videos myself, I could not ask the interviewees for clarification or additional explanation. In addition, the centre's team has perhaps selectively shared people's positive retreat experiences for marketing. However, this should not mean that the videos represent insincere accounts or narratives. Notwithstanding this, I attempted to be objective about the interviews, their purpose, selection, and provision, and they provided an exciting possibility to analyse people's spiritual journeys during the Covid-19 restrictions.

4.5 Findings and Discussion

I provide my findings and discuss them in tandem by considering each analysing question in the following subsections. This may seem unusual; however, since my discussions benefit from a side-by-side illustration of the residents' narrative excerpts, I provide my findings and discussions together in accordance with how I analysed them[15]. I start by discussing the residents' motivations.

4.5.1 Why Did the Residents Engage in a Contemplative Spiritual Retreat?

The interviewer asked the residents about their motivations for residing at the retreat centre in the videos. Eleven residents answered this question by reflecting on their lives. I analysed these motivations as this allowed me to understand the kind of outcomes the residents sought and what role information might play in facilitating them. I identified five significant motivations as follows:-

4.5.1.1 Something Missing

Namdev, Mukti, Nirmal, Shivam, Gurudas, and Nirmala described a sense of something missing in their lives as a reason for engaging in the contemplative spiritual retreat. They did not attribute this feeling to any particular event but spoke of it as a general awareness of something negative. Chabot (2019) identified similar motivations when examining Western Buddhists' information-seeking

[15] This approach is also advocated by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995), who believe combining concrete exemplification and discursive commentary can help better present thematic findings in qualitative research (Hartel, 2020).

practices and noted that his participants 'had a desire or motivation to seek out a way to end their unhappiness, low mood, or dissatisfaction' (p.109). I interpreted these senses of something missing through the lens of meaning-making as a manifestation of the inherent need for meaning. I provide excerpts from Namdev and Shivam's narratives to illustrate this as follows:

> "What brought me here? It is a long story, but, basically, life, I was trying everything, everything that was told to me that was good for life, and it was not fulfilling me somehow. I was trying many things and, in the basic things, I had a good job and, you know, a nice family and everything, but it was just, inside, something was not working. And that led me to a spiritual path" (Namdev).

> "Because I found something was missing in my life. I felt a lot of darkness inside, and I was looking for help" (Shivam).

Initially, Namdev, Mukti, Nirmal, Shivam, Gurudas, and Nirmala's descriptions of something missing did not appear to be the same as an information need (introduced in Section 1.3 earlier); it did not seem that these residents believed what was missing would be overcome through some information. Instead, as Chabot (2019) likewise noted, they sought a better experience rather than 'tangible information-like information' (p.109). The vague nature of this motivation, as exemplified in Namdev's remark that something was not working, is reminiscent of Taylor's (1968) visceral need. Although it may resemble Dervin's Sense-Making theory's idea of a gap (discussed in 1.1.1 earlier), a more apt metaphor seems to be a hole in both senses of the word, i.e. a hollow space inside oneself and a situation to escape from—nevertheless, a conscious desire to overcome this negative feeling motivated the residents to seek spiritual knowledge.

4.5.1.2 Gradual Changes in Worldview

A slightly more dramatic account talked about recognitions that justified a change in materialistic goals, beliefs and understanding of what was meaningful in life. Gurudas's for example, stated:

> "I started to recognise that, gosh, the one thing that's been my life's dream [to start a company] hasn't brought me the fulfilment or happiness that I am seeking. And that was a big recognition. And so, I started to recognise that if this thing didn't bring it for me, then really, none of my other dreams to get married, to have a wife, to have kids, anything

> else I just recognised, none of those things are going to bring me this inner fulfilment. It must be, I must start looking kind of this way *gestures inwards toward his chest* And so I started meditating. I'd never done that before. So I started to explore, I used the app Headspace, and so I was meditating for a while and then for longer and longer" (Gurudas).

Initially, Gurudas explained that his dream of starting a company proved to be anticlimactic due to a persistent feeling of unfulfillment even after accomplishing his materialistic ambitions. This disappointment caused him to reexamine what was meaningful. Therefore, I interpreted a change in his worldview as a reaction to the need for meaning. In explaining the role of information in meaning-making interactions, Ruthven (2019) explained that this reorientation could sometimes 'result from a growing awareness that our lives are not working, leading to the desire to belong to a new community or social grouping that is a better fit to how we wish to live our lives in a more 'meaningful' way' (p.164). Therefore, with a renewed understanding, Gurudas sought spiritual information and engaged in spiritual practices to help him achieve his new ambitions of a spiritual nature. Chatman (1999), in her seminal work on the information behaviour of female prisoners (highlighted in Section 1.1.2), described the role of information in one's worldview as she noted that some prisoners chose to swap habitual deviant behaviours (drug-taking) for those that were better suited to a prison lifestyle. She explained that 'what seem[ed] to make this change possible [was] the perception or worldview that there [was] another value system, which work[ed] better for them' (p. 213). Moreover, recent literature on religious disengagement also notes similar motivations regarding meaning and worldview changes (Exline et al., 2020). For example, Exline et al. (2020) note that, albeit in the opposite direction, people may pull away from spirituality or religion because it may fail to provide a 'compelling sense of life direction or purpose'. (p.10). Therefore, the need for meaning can outweigh commitments to existing value systems and worldviews.

4.5.1.3 Significant Events

Amara's and Shiva Shankar's narratives retold profound experiences of stressful events and personal loss. Both narratives assigned particular importance to these distressing events as causes for encountering spiritual information and seeking spiritual guidance. For example, in Shiva-Shankar's narrative, he encountered a spiritual book in an Italian library and having resonated with its message, he wished to meet its author, but going through a stressful incident that made him end up in a hospital, made this desire much more urgent and imperative. Similarly,

Amara's narrative (shown below) explains how she used spiritual information to come to terms with losing her sibling.

> "I guess the most kind of poignant moment was, um, my sister died when she was 21, and I was 23. And I remember like, it was such a powerful time and everything was just turned upside down. And I remember feeling like as though you're walking along with your head down and then all of a sudden you trip and you start to look around and, and ask questions, like, what is all of this about, you know, like when you experienced death of someone very close….And then it just, in that moment, it just became very important. And, so from then I started to just read, like I started reading books, actually, she was reading a book on Buddhism and I found that and started to read that" (Amara).

Like Amara's and Shiva Shankar's cases, prior research suggests that spiritual needs and concerns can often arise for people in palliative care contexts and later life stages (Baker, 2004; Fourie, 2008). Moreover, in her influential framework on spirituality-related meaning-making, Park (2013) described two levels of meaning- (1) Global meaning as people's general orienting systems and worldview, and (2) Situational meaning, i.e. the meaning of specific situations or events. Her model (Park, 2010a) proposed 'that people's perception of discrepancies between their appraised meaning of a particular situation and their global meaning creates distress, triggering efforts to reduce the discrepancy and resultant distress' (p.40). This way, stressful events can create losses in situational meaning, intensifying the inherent need for meaning. For example, when interpreted through the lens of spirituality-related meaning-making, Amara and Shiv Shankar used and sought spiritual information, which helped them regain meaning in the wake of their distressing experiences.

4.5.1.4 Mystical Glimpses

Siddhartha's and Govinda's narratives shared memories of mystical experiences to explain their interest in spirituality and motivations for engaging in contemplative spiritual retreats. Even though these experiences happened many years ago, in Govinda's case, in childhood, memories of the experiences continued to serve as potent drivers that fuelled both residents' searches for spiritual knowledge. Siddhartha's narrative, for example, stated:

> "The idea of awakening or enlightenment was like something that, for me, was such a strong drive for such a long time. And that was also linked because I had a very strong experience at a certain point in my life where I really felt like somehow I was at one with

> everything and like my ego just completely disappeared and like, wow, you know, like there's only this, and there's only ever been this and suffering is an illusion. And it was just such a strong blast. Like an atomic bomb had gone off and my entire previous life was gone, and all that was left was just this like, you know, this awakening. And in that moment also, I felt like this is enlightenment. You know, it really, it really was like that. It's just eternal bliss, you know, but then somehow there was the sense of shifting out of that and something coming back into a shape or something like that. And then once that happened, all of a sudden there was this really strong thing of like, I have to get back there. I have to get back to that" (Siddhartha).

These experiences, variously termed mystical, religious, numinous, and awakening experiences, have been identified by scholars in information science and museum studies (as reviewed in Section 2.6). To review, Cameron and Gatewood (2003) recognised a phenomenon of numen-seeking as 'a strong motivation for many who visit historical sites' (p. 55). Likewise, Latham (2013) illustrated that seeking mystical experiences could motivate museum visits. In addition, outside information research, Taylor and Egeto-Szabo (2017) explained that an experience of this kind for some people provided 'the knowledge that this dimension of meaning and harmony existed' (p.49), which could fuel a desire to recreate the experience by seeking spiritual knowledge and engaging in spiritual practices. However, Park's (2013) framework discussed earlier did not cater to positive events, such as Siddhartha's and Govinda's mystical glimpses. Ruthven indicated this as well in his (2019) CHIIR perspectives paper (reflected upon in Section 3.1 earlier). For Siddharth, the glimpse provided a short-lived dramatic contrast of meaningfulness and fulfilment, which amplified his search for spiritual knowledge as demonstrated in his statement, 'I have to get back there. I have to get back to that'. However, information interactions like mystical glimpses have been little explored or investigated in the literature. Moreover, several information scholars have argued that positive emotions can be powerful motivators for information seeking and deserve more research attention (e.g., Fulton, 2009; Savolainen, 2014).

4.5.1.5 A Desire for Spiritual Knowledge

Although all the residents expressed a desire for spiritual knowledge in some form, Bholenath's and Nirmal's narratives (excerpts below) talked about their motivations by explicitly using the word God. They expressed a longing for God and a desire for ways to satisfy that longing.

> "what brought me here is just this desire to know God and to yeah, just to know God and to find someone, in whom I feel the authority, the power, the love of someone who can make me know God, help me to know God, introduce me to God" (Bholenath).

> "I always had a love of God in my heart. It may have not been so obvious as it is now since meeting Guruji. But there was the love of God and I was always searching for something to fulfil that, sometimes searching in the wrong ways but still always searching something to fulfil that, that hole that was inside" (Nirmal).

Siracky's (2013) analysis of Catholic university students' spiritual journalling practices also identified this. Although her work did not explicitly refer to the motivations behind documenting and reflecting upon one's spiritual life as a desire for spiritual knowledge, she explained her participants' activities as attempts to 'grow in an understanding of and a relationship with God' (p.95).

4.5.1.6 Overall or Cross-cutting Motivation

A common theme across the five significant motivations was emotions or affective states. The residents wished to overcome the negative affective states such as unfulfillment, distress, and unhappiness associated with the sense of something missing, significant events, and gradual changes in worldview. Moreover, in the case of mystical glimpses, the residents wished to reattain somehow the positive affective states they had once glimpsed. Therefore, the residents primarily sought affective outcomes from their information interactions.

4.5.2 What Were the Sources of Spiritual Information at the Retreat Centre? And What Kinds of Spiritual Information Did the Residents Use?

Before residing at the retreat centre, the residents talked about engagements with various spiritual information sources. For example, Amara mentioned a book on Buddhism, Gayatri and Nirmal watched online videos, Namdev said he used DVDs, Mukti and Siddhartha participated in online retreats, Shiva Shankar encountered a spiritual book in a library, and Gurudas mentioned using a mobile application. The following excerpts exemplify some of these information sources.

> "I used the app Headspace" (Gurudas).

> "I was watching [the online videos] every day. I was just, I was obsessed… just watching Satsang all the time" (Nirmal).

> "We did our first retreat online, and everything, I just remember, like, everything shifted really quickly" (Mukti).

> " I just watched a YouTube and then that was really it, something just kind of woke up inside" (Gayatri).

However, whilst in residence, the Guru became the central information source for the retreat residents. In addition, they may have continued to engage with other sources such as books and the Internet, but I cannot ascertain this from the narratives/interviews alone. The residents used terms such as teachings, pointings and guidance to describe the Guru's words as spiritual information. They used this information for spiritual growth and believed the guru's speech to be direct, simple and thought-provoking. Govinda explained this as 'My God, such simple pointings, no? and guidance, no? It was even playful, the way he put it. What a revolution, what revolution inside myself'. Moreover, Gayatri described Sahaja as 'a place that people could come [to] and spend more time with the things that [Mooji] was pointing to, and to sit with his teachings and really reflect'.

4.5.3 How Did the Residents Interact with Spiritual Information?

A typical interview question in the videos asked the residents about the Guru's guidance. They responded by reflecting on their experiences and explaining their interactions with the Guru. In most cases, these took the form of formal and informal interactions that proved insightful and transformative. In addition, Amara, Gurudas, and Siddhartha shared barriers that slowed their progress initially. I explain the residents' formal and informal interactions in the following subsections.

4.5.3.1 Interactions with the Guru: Formal Interactions

> "The important thing was Satsang. Not about these [other] things when I came here" (Govinda).

Several narratives (e.g., Govinda's above) indicated that the residents interacted with the Guru through formal sessions known as the Satsangs. The centre's website describes a Satsang as 'sitting

in the presence of a spiritual master where seekers ask questions and receive guidance'. It also explains that 'Satsang can take place by following the teachings offered in a video, audio recording or book'[16]. Moreover, the Oxford English Dictionary defines a Satsang as 'an association or sacred gathering for the purpose of spiritual discourse with an enlightened teacher or mentor' (OED Online, 2021). From the narratives, these gatherings seemed to be intimate question-answer sessions where residents spent time in silent contemplation after sharing their concerns with the Guru. I used further video recordings of Satsangs on the centre's website to better understand Satsang sessions[17]. The additional video recordings revealed that people typically came to the Satsangs with unsettling feelings of doubt, agitation, and distress due to the kinds of affective motivations described earlier. As a result, they sought help from the Guru, hoping his guidance would help alleviate their problems. In this respect, the Satsangs seemed to have some commonalities with therapy sessions. However, they were distinctively spiritual and contemplative by virtue of the vocabulary involved.

In a typical example[18], a Satsang attendee commenced by sharing two questions with the Guru; the first was about sadness, and the second was about relationships. The attendee explained that she found the ending of intimate relationships distressful and tacitly sought the Guru's guidance. In response, the Guru shared his insights and explained that her problems resulted from a mistaken identification with a personal identity that did not have a real basis. In time, he directed her to carry out silent contemplation to apprehend this falsehood by carefully introspecting 'who' would be affected if her fears of rejection came true. He then encouraged her to continue this contemplation silently throughout the retreat to discover her spiritual identity without personal needs, desires and judgements. Therefore, it appeared the residents were trying to solve their problems cognitively by making sense of their distress; however, the guru insisted on *not thinking* and meditating/contemplating instead[19]. As a result, since their distress had an experiential reality, which they usually dealt with conceptually by sensemaking, and the Guru's words suggested

[16] https://mooji.org/satsang

[17] https://mooji.org/collections/relationships

[18] https://mooji.org/satsangs/no-need-to-be-loved

[19] This also comes up in Chabot (2014), wherein Chabot explains that Buddhist practices typically attempt to challenge people's habitual sensemaking as they believe it leads to suffering and misery (p. #)

contemplating instead of conceptualising, this caused dissonance between these two opposed positions, which the Satsang attendees were encouraged to resolve through silent contemplation. In essence, it appeared that the attendees viewed the Guru as a source of spiritual intelligence and seemed to believe they would be relieved of their distress if they could attain his wisdom. In addition, since the silent contemplation (Satsang) activity advocated attaining a non-conceptual understanding rather than habitual sensemaking, the residents appeared to be engaging in a kind of information 'non-practice' to refrain from solving their problems cognitively (I shall discuss this in detail in 7.2.2.3). This way, I believe their contemplative information non-practice also differed from mindfulness, relaxation or stress reduction in that it did not appear to cultivate a thoughtful awareness of the present but attempted to allow a non-conceptual understanding or wisdom to arise by inhibiting habitual sensemaking or conceptualisation.

4.5.3.2 Interactions with the Guru: Informal Interactions

Another aspect of residing at the retreat centre was the proximate interactions with the Guru. These interactions served as a source of support and validation outside of the Satsang sessions. Mahima appreciated that the Guru was the same off-camera as on-camera, Shiv Shankar admired his non-judgemental attitude, and Govinda discovered that the Guru was just a regular person who was very easy to be around. In Thor's narrative (quoted below), he shared an informal interaction that provoked understanding and determination.

> "I was carrying all this dirty laundry and I meet Guruji on the road and I say to him, now you get to see all my dirty laundry. And he looks into my eyes and he says, I only see you. And for me, that really sort of put into place what my time is here for and what my life is about. It's not about fixing my person. It's not about becoming a better identity. It's about discovering who I am beyond all identity and all personal states" (Thor).

Moreover, in Nirmala's case, the interactions provided efficacy to the Guru's words. She demonstrated this by saying that '[his guidance] is not something that he talks about. Like, he talks about it, but he lives it. He lives this truth, and he is the example for all of us that I have never seen'. Therefore the informal interactions helped validate the formal ones by possibly allowing the residents to verify the Guru's integrity and dependableness.

4.5.4 Barriers During Formal Interactions

Aside from discussing their interactions, some narratives went into detail about informational barriers. Amara, Gurudas and Siddhartha explained that their attempts to *understand* and *intellectually comprehend* the Guru's guidance initially hindered their spiritual growth. I provide some example excerpts to illustrate this as follows:

> "in the beginning, I used to pause sometimes because I wouldn't understand everything. And I might search for something on Wikipedia or look up the meaning of a word or something simple like that. But after a while that just relaxed and I could see that actually everything he's sharing with me sometimes it's just, I'm just really, I'm getting it in a different way. There's a different kind of understanding. And it's just that because it's not that he's really giving you something. It's more like he's removing the ignorance" (Amara).

> "When I first came into contact with Mooji's pointings, it was like, I could sense that what he was saying was true and that it was really simple, but it was like, I kept getting caught up in this like really strong mind energy of trying to figure it out. And it felt like the more I tried to figure it out, the more complicated or confusing it got like you're getting closer and closer, but you're never quite getting to that point. But then somehow, at some point, just something opened up…And when that space somehow opens up, it's like, there's such a peace and such a calm" (Siddhartha).

Savolainen (2016) explained that external or internal barriers could hinder information seeking. Furthermore, he explained that internal barriers may either be affective or cognitive. In Amara's case, the barrier seemed cognitive, as it stemmed from unfamiliarity with the nomenclature. However, she did not directly address this; instead, she realised she did not need to. For Siddharth, the barrier seemed to be a mixture of cognition and affect; as he mentioned, the more he tried, the more confused he felt. I initially interpreted these interactions according to Kari's (2007) assertion that people could supposedly acquire information through spiritual means (p.957). I based this on Amara's recognition that she received the transmission 'in a different way' and Siddhartha's contention that 'a space opened up'. However, this did not seem apt, as Amara explained that she resolved this issue by relaxing, i.e. reinterpreting what was relevant and essential. Moreover,

Siddharth reinterpreted his confusion as an element of the contemplative process. Therefore both interactions, I felt, were conventional rather than unconventionally or spiritually informative.

4.5.5 What Were The Outcomes of the Interactions?

Some final interview questions asked the residents about the effects of the formal interactions, i.e. the Satsang sessions. They responded by sharing both short-term and long-term effects in their narratives. I categorised these as affective and contemplative outcomes.

4.5.5.1 Affective Outcomes

For most residents, the retreat interactions profoundly impacted their emotional well-being in the long term. For example, Gurudas, Shivam, Namdev, Siddharth, Mukti, Lakshmi, Amara, Gayatri and Mahima all mentioned positive affective states such as joy, peace, bliss and happiness. Moreover, Siddhartha and Mukti experienced a positive change in their interpersonal relationship. I share some excerpts as follows:

> "I feel so much joy, inside, and so much happiness and so much gratitude for this life I'm living and I know that's what I've been looking for all my life. I've been looking for this, for being at peace, for just being natural, which I couldn't. I didn't know what it meant before and now I feel, yes, it's like a completely different experience of life" (Shivam).

> "[My wife and I] were watching these Satsangs together and really following the pointings together and coming to this place of clarity about who we truly are. And then, when I sat with her, it felt like we were just meeting each other again, for the first time" (Siddharth).

> "But now I'm just sitting here in a room, looking into my own experience and experiencing the greatest joy and peace and lightness and possibility you know? Just a vast openness" (Gurudas).

This reaffirmed my understanding that the residents' information interactions were primarily affect-related; however, such interactions have traditionally been given little attention compared with cognitive ones in traditional information behaviour theories and models. The affective turn

(discussed in Section 1.1.2) attempted to bring more attention to affective phenomena in information behaviour; however, prevalent affect-related models primarily relate to seeking cognitive rather than affective outcomes[20].

4.5.5.2 Contemplative Outcomes

Additionally, for Nirmala, Gurudas, Mukti and Nirmal, the formal interaction sessions facilitated understanding and flashes of insight. They explained that the interactions had transformed their self-awareness and helped them grow spiritually. Mukti, for example, stated:

> "I just remember sitting after retreat and seeing that all of [my problems] were just like an approach I was taking of situations that were arising. So it felt like a lot of space was just opening up and at the same time being challenged as well, like the sense of who I am, like everything was just kind of falling away" (Mukti).

These outcomes supported Gorichanaz and Latham's (2019) conceptual work (discussed in Section 2.5), which explained that information could be involved in other aspects of life apart from epistemological ones. The precise mechanism of how information contributed to these outcomes is a task for future research and is something I shall discuss in Section 7.4 later.

4.6 Study Conclusion and Link to Chapter 5

This chapter provided insights into how and why people used spiritual information at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre. In addition, It demonstrated meaning-making as a helpful lens to interpret the motivations for seeking information in contexts such as spirituality and religion. However, several residents' narratives also characterised their spiritual interactions in search-related terms. For example, Nirmal stated: 'I was always searching for something to fulfil that, sometimes searching in the wrong ways but still always searching something to fulfil that, that hole that was inside'. Moreover, the retreat centre described itself as 'a modern-day monastery for mature seekers'. Therefore, in addition to meaning-making, spiritual behaviours and interactions might be understood and examined as a search amongst various spiritual sources of information. Accordingly, the following chapter investigates this further by presenting an interpretivistic investigation of spiritual-seeking concerns and patterns in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts.

[20] I shall discuss this more in Chapter 7: General Discussion.

5 Study Two: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking

5.1 Overview

Besides motivation and information phenomena-related findings, the previous investigation revealed that spiritual people often described their spiritual journeys in terms of a search. Seeking and searching are central to information and library research; however, their characteristic features and applicability to contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts are unclear (see also gaps and challenges discussed in Section 2.7). Accordingly, this chapter presents a study investigating contemporary spiritual-seeking activities and concerns and introduces the sociological concept of Seekership or spiritual seeking as an intuitive contextual approach for undertaking information research in under-explored domains such as spirituality, religion and contemplation.

5.2 Study Introduction

> "At 18 years old, I found myself in New York City submerged in the world of student protests. But at the same time, I had an even stronger pull towards another movement that was just beginning to happen as the gurus from the East began washing up on the shores of America. I'd had a yearning for some kind of spiritual life ever since I can remember, even as a young child. My parents were atheists; I had no religious training. In fact, in my family, religion was synonymous with a lack of intelligence. But I was strongly compelled to check it out. So I had two very strong aspects of myself—a political/social justice self and a spiritual self. That was what brought me to the spiritual search" (Elizabeth Lesser, interviewed in Fox, 2015).

Discussions in contemporary spirituality frequently highlight a phenomenon of spiritual seeking; moreover, people often describe their spiritual journeys in terms of a search. This chapter examines this metaphor by presenting a study that analysed spiritual seeking and its informational features in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen spiritual teachers and speakers who were asked questions about spiritual seeking in religiously unaffiliated spirituality. My participants explained that 1) contemporary spiritual seekers sought spiritual information due to affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns; spiritual-seeking interactions incorporated practices such as prayer, yoga and meditation;

and contemporary spiritual information interactions are facilitated through spiritual retreats, meditation classes, yoga classes and online social platforms. Since I focused on spiritual seeking in contemporary religiously unaffiliated contexts, my findings cannot exhaustively represent all spiritual pursuits in contemporary society. This chapter (1) identifies spiritual seekers' concerns and spiritual-seeking patterns; (2) explains spiritual seeking as an activity that may theoretically reside within a broader framework of profound information interactions; and (3) offers a preliminary explication of the characteristic aspects of such interactions. In addition, it introduces the sociological concept of Seekership or spiritual seeking as an intuitive contextual approach for undertaking information research in under-explored domains such as spirituality, religion and contemplation.

5.3 Study Background

As discussed in Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research, unaffiliated forms of spirituality emerged alongside secularism as modern Euro-American alternatives to institutionalised religion (van der Veer, 2009). Characterised by emphasising individual experiences and ways of life, popular culture often portrays these spiritualities as profound pursuits of personal growth surrounded by searches for meaning, purpose and life value (e.g. Martel, 2001; Gilbert, 2007). These spiritualities may be influenced by ideas and practices such as those in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam; however, what sets them apart is a non-commitment to any formalised tradition. In sociology, scholars now suggest that these individual pursuits might be explained as a wider social anthropological phenomenon of Seekership or spiritual seeking (Sutcliffe, 2016).

Initially used in the context of religious conversion and deviance (Lofland and Stark, 1965), the term Seekership or spiritual seeking has gathered greater acceptance in popular and scholarly works concerning religiously unaffiliated categories such as New Age, Unchurched and Spiritual But Not Religious (e.g. Sutcliffe and Bowman, 2022; Fuller, 2001; Mercadante, 2014). The proliferation of these categories depicts a significant shift in our understanding of spirituality in the last few decades, as Western and Westernised cultures increasingly juxtapose contemporary forms of spirituality with religion (Huss, 2014). This shift positions contemporary forms of spirituality away from traditional associations with religious grand narratives and links them to postmodernism's pluralistic, relativist and anti-authoritarian attitudes. Therefore, contemporary spiritual seeking or

Seekership may be understood collectively as searching for personal meaning and value systems in a post-religious society (Sentner, 2014).

Although the term is yet to be sufficiently theorised in sociological research, some early descriptions of Seekership are available; for example, Campbell (1972) described seekers as those who 'adopted a problem-solving perspective while defining conventional religious institutions and beliefs as inadequate' (p. 123). Shortly before this, Lofland and Stark (1965) explained Seekership as 'a floundering among religious alternatives, [with] an openness to a variety of religious views, frequently esoteric, combined with [a] failure to embrace the specific ideology and fellowship of some set of believers' (p. 870). As an alternative to the negative representations utilised by Lofland and Stark, Strauss (1979) suggested viewing Seekership positively by considering an individual seeker as someone 'striving and strategizing to achieve meaningful change to his or her life experience' (p. 158). Furthermore, Roof (1993) depicted seekers as those who 'turn[ed] to serious metaphysical quests on their own in hopes of finding a more fulfilling way of believing and living' (p. 79).

In relatively recent contributions, Fuller (2001) described a type of unchurched individuals as being 'concerned with spiritual issues but [choosing] to pursue them outside of a formal religious organization' (p. 4). Smith and Denton (2008) referred to seekers as 'people who have an interest in spiritual matters but are not devoted to one particular historical faith or denomination' (p. 73). Finally, Mercadante (2014) categorised a type of spiritual but not religious people as seekers 'seeking a spiritual home in which to settle down' (p. #). Therefore, it is evident that spiritual-seeking activities may serve as 'the minimal points of ideological congruence' (Lofland and Stark, 1965, p. 870) for these spiritual categories and provide the necessary context for understanding information interactions in contemporary spirituality and religion. However, a detailed analysis of Seekership and its informational features is still required.

As a research area, spiritual needs are relatively understudied in information science (see Chapter Two for a detailed review). Some excellent work in this direction has explained the information practices of Christian church leaders, Catholic individuals, Muslim converts and Western Buddhists (e.g. Siracky, 2013; Michels, 2014; Gorichanaz, 2016; Guzik, 2017; Chabot, 2019). However, these studies have concerned themselves with formalised traditions and do not represent several contemporary forms of spirituality and their distinctive religious non-affiliation. Instead, conceptual attempts to bridge information science with the emerging discipline of contemplative

studies (e.g. Latham et al., 2020; Gorichanaz, 2020; Gorichanaz and Latham, 2019; Pyati, 2019) may count as forays into contemporary spirituality and religiously unaffiliated interactions. These conceptualisations may benefit from understanding contemporary spiritual seeking, as this may help us explain how and why people engage with various spiritual information sources in modern Western society and culture. Besides documentary information sources, spiritual seeking can involve various contemplative spiritual practices such as meditation, chanting, retreat, pilgrimage, labyrinth walking, journaling and dialogue. Many of these practices originate in spiritual traditions and may help facilitate the outcomes sought by contemporary spiritual seekers. For example, Sutcliffe (2016) explained that:

> 'the range of practices available to support this 'search' is glimpsed in my own career as a seeker in Edinburgh in the 1980s: Between 1983 and 1986, in no particular order, I read popular accounts of Buddhism and Taoism, consulted the I Ching, learnt to read Tarot cards … had my astrological birthchart prepared … practised Zen meditation and struggled with T'ai Chi' (Sutcliffe, 2016 p. #).

Therefore, contemporary spiritual seeking may amalgamate conventional epistemological inquiry with contemplative and embodied forms of information interaction. However, the precise relationship between information and contemplative spiritual practice is relatively unexplored.

Some topics typically discussed amongst contemporary spiritual seekers include transcendence, human nature, community and the afterlife (Mercadante, 2014). One such topic that relates to transcendence is non-duality or non-dualism.

Simply put, non-duality refers to the invalidation of a subject-object (or dual) experience. Historically, non-duality is attributed to Eastern spiritual sources such as the Hindu Upanishads, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist texts and the Taoist Tao Te Ching (Taft, 2014). However, non-dualistic ideas also appear in apophatic Christian mysticism and Kabbalistic Judaism (Bannon, 2015; Michaelson, 2009). In addition, scholars have discussed non-duality in relation to mysticism, contemplative practice, spiritual philosophy and spiritual experience (e.g. Kourie, 2008; Josipovic, 2010; Loy, 2012; Wade, 2018). Moreover, non-duality is a popular spiritual topic on online video-sharing platforms and Internet forums, with teachers and speakers facilitating everyday discussions. These discussions can serve as valuable grounds for information research as they

provide a means of investigating information interactions in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. Accordingly, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- RQ4 How do contemporary spiritual teachers and non-duality speakers explain spiritual seeking?
- RQ5 What are the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking?

The following sections explain this study's method and data analysis technique.

5.4 Interview Method and Data Analysis Technique

As explained in Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account, I sought the involvement of spiritual teachers and speakers in this study as they could provide rich data about spiritual seeking attempts and common perceptions held amongst contemporary spiritual seekers. Accordingly, I searched the popular video-sharing platform YouTube for keywords such as spiritual seeking and non-duality and found several recorded discussions and talks on these topics. I then used purposive and opportunistic sampling to select teachers and speakers who talked about spiritual seeking and non-duality through their YouTube videos and solicited participation by directly emailing potential interviewees. The potential participants spoke English and had spent many years speaking to Western audiences in contemporary spirituality. In addition, they had a history of engaging with spiritual information, evidenced by anecdotes in their talks, and explained aspects of contemporary spirituality without associating with traditional religiosity. These attributes made them a valuable resource capable of providing generalisations about spiritual seeking in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts.

After gaining approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee, I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen contemporary spiritual teachers and non-duality speakers[21]. Three participants resided in the UK, three in the Netherlands, two in the USA, and one each in Canada, Spain, Germany, Austria and Mauritius (see Table 1 for my character descriptions of the participants). As a token of gratitude for their time and participation, I sent each participant a gift

[21] Some participants identified as teachers, and others identified as *speakers* rather than teachers. However, since this distinction was a personal preference for my participants, it did not affect my study's sampling strategy. Accordingly, I use the combination term 'teachers and speakers' throughout this study and thesis to allow this possible distinction while still referring to my participants as a single unit.

voucher worth £20 at the end of the data collection stage (only one participant was made aware of this before participation).

Participant Number	Gender	Country	Description
P1	Male	USA	A writer and modern non-duality teacher who has been speaking on the topics of non-duality, self-inquiry and enlightenment since 2005.
P2	Male	Canada	A contemporary non-duality speaker who is interested in sharing the nonduality message by organising online talks, discussions and conferences.
P3	Female	Netherlands	A non-duality speaker who was a spiritual seeker for several years. She now speaks about radical non-duality to online and in-person audiences.
P4	Female	England	A writer and non-duality speaker who spent several years on the spiritual path. She came across the message of non-duality from other speakers and now travels and speaks to audiences in various countries.
P5	Female	Mauritius	A Writer and guide to liberation who has been speaking and presenting on the topic of non-duality, liberation and related topics since 2011.
P6	Female	Spain	A writer and non-duality speaker who has been speaking to audiences in contemporary spirituality for the past seven years.
P7	Male	Germany	An author and non-duality speaker who has been speaking on the topic of non-duality since 2011. He has written several books on non-duality and has been holding talks and intensives throughout the world.
P8	Female	Netherlands	A non-duality speaker and former spiritual seeker who gives in-person talks in her country and Zoom meetings all over the world.
P9	Female	England	A spiritual teacher who holds group events online and around the world. She has been talking about the topics of non-duality, embodied awareness, channelling and self-inquiry for several years.
P10	Male	USA	A contemporary spiritual teacher, writer and former spiritual seeker whose writings have featured in popular philosophical magazines and journals.
P11	Male	Austria	A contemporary non-duality speaker who is regularly invited to speak at various international venues.
P12	Female	Netherlands	A non-duality speaker and former spiritual seeker who shares talks and discussions about non-duality, spiritual seeking and psychology through her YouTube and social media platforms.

P13	Male	England	A spiritual teacher and former spiritual seeker who holds weekly meetings in person and online. He has spoken at various non-duality events and provides online talks, spiritual discourses and contemplative group discussions to both Western and Eastern audiences.

Table 1: Participants' character descriptions

I interviewed my participants electronically through Zoom's online video conferencing platform. Most interviews were about 45 minutes long, with the shortest being 31 minutes and the longest being 83 minutes. Before each interview, I took the participants through an information sheet explaining the kinds of questions I would ask, my intention to audio record the interviews, and the data handling and anonymisation process. My interview strategy aimed to gather opinions from several teachers and speakers to attain a detailed description of spiritual seeking. To do so, I used an empathy-first approach similar to McKay et al. (2020). This approach involved recognising the inquisitive nature of the interviews and avoiding judgemental questions wherever possible. Therefore, I did not ask questions that would force the participants to defend their opinions; instead, I provided frequent empathic acknowledgements interspersed with probes encouraging the interviewees to further elaborate on their words.

I began each interview with an invitation asking the participants to describe a story of spiritual seeking or the question, What is spiritual seeking? I explained that the participants could answer this through a general understanding of spiritual seeking, a personal spiritual seeking story, or both. I then gathered details by probing participants with questions such as why does the seeking apparently happen? What are seekers looking for? What does the search look like? And is something found in the end? Most interviews then transitioned into questions about the kinds of information spiritual seekers might come across, how seekers sought, used and evaluated information sources and the role of spiritual information in spiritual seeking. Finally, I concluded the interviews with a generic question on the topic of non-duality, such as What is non-duality? I explain my analysis process and study limitations in the following subsections.

5.4.1 Analysis

To analyse each interview, I thematically coded the transcripts by looking for answers to the following analysing questions:

- What is spiritual seeking?

- What questions do spiritual seekers have?
- What does the search look like informationally?
- How does spiritual seeking relate to problem-solving and everyday life activities?

I determined these questions by identifying relationships between the participants' responses and my study's research questions. The first three analysing questions were straightforwardly related to the study's research questions. However, due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, interviewees often shared additional insights when asked to talk more about certain aspects. These insights generally took the form of answers to the fourth analysing question and helped further characterise spiritual seeking's informational features.

5.4.2 Study Limitations

Since I focused on spiritual seeking in contemporary religiously unaffiliated spiritual settings, the interviewed group was reasonably homogenous to represent teachers and speakers who spoke on the topic of non-duality in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. In addition, my participants lived and operated in Western and Westernised countries; however, contemporary spirituality can include discussions on other topics apart from non-duality, and talks about spiritual seeking may also occur in Eastern contexts and religiously affiliated settings. Therefore, my findings cannot exhaustively represent all spiritual pursuits in contemporary society.

5.5 Study Findings

I now provide my study's findings in accordance with the analysing questions explained in Section 5.4.1.

5.5.1 What is Spiritual Seeking?

I began each interview by asking participants to describe the phenomenon of spiritual seeking. In response, ten participants contributed by generalising their everyday interactions with contemporary spiritual seekers, and an additional three participants narrated a personal spiritual-seeking story.

My participants described spiritual seeking as a persistent long-term endeavour to find an answer to one's problems. They explained that, for some seekers, these problems related to adverse life events and challenges, igniting questions such as 'Why is this happening to me? Is there some

deeper meaning to this? [P9]' and for others, mystical experiences may bring about 'a sensing of something deeper [P9]' or 'new way of seeing reality [P5]', instigating attempts to seek a spiritual explanation to the mystery. Some participants characterised spiritual seeking negatively as an attempt to 'get rid of certain feelings [P8]' and 'escape reality [P2]'; conversely, others explained there might be 'a beauty in looking in spirituality for truth or answering questions you might have [P4]'. P11 described spiritual seeking as 'the need to find an answer to my existence or my reality [P11]', and for P12, it was an 'anxious voice that was telling me I needed to find the truth [P12]'. Broadly, my participants' descriptions of spiritual seeking displayed qualitative attributes of depth, height and interiority. These attributes were portrayed in words that the participants reached out for to characterise general understandings of personal meaning, transcendence, individuality and self-awareness. I identified these thematically as 'A Search for Something Deeper', 'A Search for Something Higher', and 'A Search Inward'. I elaborate on these in the following subsections.

5.5.1.1 A Search for Something Deeper

The first theme relates to descriptions that characterised spiritual seeking as a search for meaning, purpose, and existential fulfilment, metaphorically portrayed as a search for something deeper. To illustrate, I provide an excerpt from Participant 7's interview below.

> '[spiritual seeking] is the search for something deeper I think… it's just the assumption that there must be something deeper, something deeper than what's on the surface, something deeper than what's perceived… It just seems to be this subtle unfulfillment and the need to somehow find an answer to it' [P7].

A common perception under this theme maintained that although traditional religiosity may be declining, some people may be 'more inclined to spirituality [P3]', and as a result, they may actively look for something 'beyond the normal mundane human activities that [are] accessible in some sense [P10]'. Accordingly, these descriptions viewed spiritual seeking as looking for personal meaning and fulfilment through spiritual teachings and guidance offered by spiritual sources. However, responses under this theme also included spiritual-seeking attempts that expressed an inquisitiveness about the mystery of life and sought ways to address that curiosity by engaging with spiritual content and resources. For example, Participant 1 stated:

> 'somebody's trying to figure out who and what they are, or the nature of reality, or something in them calls to there's more than what meets the eye… they're just curious; curiosity drives them on the spiritual search' [P1]

Accordingly, these descriptions linked spiritual seeking with meaning *and* beyond everyday life concerns.

5.5.1.2 A Search for Something Higher

The second theme comprised responses that associated spiritual seeking with a search for something higher. These descriptions felt that, in popular culture, people often 'hear[d] stories about spirituality or things that are higher [P4]' and were therefore influenced by ideas and concepts of transcendence typical of formalised spiritual or religious traditions. As a result, responses under this theme indicated that spiritual seekers often sought spiritual information to pursue the goals outlined in specific religious traditions. Participant 3, for example, stated:

> 'spiritual seeking, I think generally is, people have this idea of some kind of ultimate truth, or this special state, which is called enlightenment' [P3]

Likewise, Participant 6 explained:

> 'they [seekers] might go to Buddhism, Buddhism might say, this is the thing you need. Or they might go to Christianity, and it says, this is the thing you need. So [spiritual seeking] depends on the seeker's concept of what it is they're looking for' [P6]

Additionally, one participant explained that although activities in spiritual but not religious contexts may not wish to associate with traditional religiosity, there may still be situations where in their search for something higher, 'a person gets out of religion but goes to a different religion, but they call it spirituality [P2]'. Therefore contemporary spiritual seeking in religiously unaffiliated contexts might portray spiritual but not religious attitudes whilst still looking for personal meaning and value systems through traditional religious means.

5.5.1.3 A Search Inward

In addition to descriptions of spiritual seeking as searches for something deeper and higher, a third theme depicted a qualitative measure of interiority. Descriptions under this theme explained that spiritual seeking was an individualistic task; concerned with improving one's personal experiences

and quality of life. In contrast with pursuits that may instead be looking for 'fulfilment in the outside world [P7]', these descriptions believed spiritual seeking was a search inward. Here, my participants highlighted seekers' concerns with thoughts, feelings and inner experiences of an intimate and private nature. For example, Participant 7 explained that:

> 'spirituality is more about how I experience; how can I appreciate life? How can I make it good inside? It's an inside seeking, in feelings, in thoughts' [P7]

In addition, some participants' descriptions emphasised interiority by contrasting spiritual seeking with dogmatic religiosity and scientific empiricism. In these cases, interviewees explained that whilst science and religion may have similar quests, they operated within a model of externality that reservedly distanced itself from the object being pursued in a way that spirituality did not. For example, Participants 2 and 1 emphasised that:

> 'In religion, it's like, you know, there's someone outside that can save me, like God or, you know, Muḥammad, [but] in spirituality [people] think that it's the inner higher self now. So they're looking for it, but this is the inward journey now' [P2]

> 'In sciences' seeking, you're dealing with Matter; so you can do tests and seek that way by when it comes to spiritual seeking, it's all rather subjective' [P1]

The following subsections explain the concerns and questions prevalent among contemporary spiritual seekers.

5.5.2 What Questions Do Spiritual Seekers Have?

When asked about their thoughts on what spiritual seekers were looking for, several participants explained that seekers were seeking answers to particular questions. In some cases, these questions were related to meaning, purpose and existential concerns. In other instances, spiritual seekers sought ways to develop their mastery of life and recover emotionally. Participant 6 generalised that spiritual seekers were either 'looking for a concept of enlightenment, or a religious experience, or for their pain to stop [P6]', and Participant 10 felt that seekers were 'searching for a couple of possible things that are probably intertwined with each other [P10]'. Overall, I identified three significant concerns: affective, developmental and metaphysical. I elaborate on these in the following subsections.

5.5.2.1 Affective Concerns

The first category of concerns pointed to emotional ups and downs and deep-seated feelings of unhappiness that may provide impetus to seek help in order to recuperate or feel better. These upsets may greatly vary in terms of their intensity from being generally 'anxious [P12]' to 'practically suicidal [P1]', and therefore, participants stressed that some seekers might intuitively seek out materials and resources motivated by feelings of 'not [being] in control of their own lives' [P1]. Participant 9 explained that:

> 'There's usually a sense of unhappiness or a feeling of unsatisfaction with life. And so there's a seeking for finding satisfaction somewhere in a deeper meaning' [P9]

Likewise, Participant 10 believed:

> 'I think it's also a drive for something that will bring peace of mind, that will bring relief from suffering' [P10]

Here, Participant 2 empathised that 'in the story of someone's life when someone dies, or they have a breakup, [there] can be quite a lot of suffering… so they're trying to relieve their sadness [P2]' and Participant 13 summarised by generalising that spiritual seekers were often looking for 'a total happiness that never ends, and that contains no sorrow in it [P13]'. In most interviews, affective concerns were cited as foundational motivations that served as a bedrock for subsequent developmental and metaphysical concerns.

5.5.2.2 Developmental Concerns

In the second category of concerns, some participants explained that spiritual seekers might be interested in spiritual growth and personal development. Participant 13 explained that spiritual seeking often included prior exposure to ideas that mobilised seekers to 'seek in [specific] spiritual traditions based upon their own knowledge of spirituality [P13]'. Similarly, Participant 9 illustrated that 'if somebody's been brought up in an Eastern environment, for example, their mind might have an idea of enlightenment and what enlightenment means…[so] something starts to seek that as the answer to solve my life's problems [P9]'. I provide example excerpts from Participants 12, 3 and 2 as follows:

> 'Spirituality is about becoming a better You' [P12]

> 'So that is like an ultimate goal for the spiritual seeker, if you get there, then you have made it, then you are enlightened' [P3]

> 'It's almost like self-improvement, that I can attain spiritual maturity or a consciousness or a development of the spirit' [P2]

Here, Participant 3 helped elucidate popular understandings of spiritual growth by highlighting that growth 'in the material world… can be money, can be status, all these kinds of things [P3]'. However, in the case of spirituality, growth often took the form of wanting less rather than more. Similarly, Participant 2 described that spirituality often associated growth with 'a desire to have less desires, a desire to have no desires [P2]'.

5.5.2.3 Metaphysical Concerns

A final category of concerns was related to metaphysics, such as ultimate and unchanging identity, value and purpose. These concerns were persistent and seemed to manifest as 'a sense of incompleteness [P12]' and an embodied feeling of 'something gone wrong [P8]'. Participant 10 explained this as:

> 'there is a drive for existential meaning, which is some stuff like why are we here at all? What is the purpose of life? And a sense that, some answers like that somehow can be found' [P10]

And Participant 7 believed:

> 'So I think that's where spirituality kicks in, assuming God or those deeper values, a real truth, real peace, something metaphysical' [P7]

In addition, offering a generalisation, Participant 1 metaphorically represented these concerns as spiritual seekers 'trying to fill this hole they feel within themselves [P1]', and Participant 11 characterised them as an underlying 'sense that something's lost [P11]', which Participant 4 explained may lead to 'a natural desire to find that and fix that [P4]'. In general, my participants did not characterise these affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns as mutually exclusive;

instead, as Participant 10 initially pointed out, these concerns were usually entwined, with affective concerns being the primary impetus.

5.5.3 What Does the Search Look Like Informationally?

In my attempts to understand the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking, I probed participants at various junctures that provided opportunities to discuss information sources, interactions and spaces. Their responses specified conventional documentary and personal information sources as well as distinctive types of spiritual practices. I elaborate on these through an account of spiritual seekers' information sources and interactions in the following subsections.

5.5.3.1 Information Sources

In interviews where participants shared anecdotes about their personal spiritual-seeking attempts, some participants offered narratives about conventional documentary information sources. For example, Participant 5 shared:

> '10 years ago I was looking for enlightenment. I didn't know what that was, how it would look like, but the book's name was Spiritual Enlightenment, [in fact] just before that I was getting into this author [called] Robert Scheinfeld and he recommended Jed McKenna's books [called Spiritual Enlightenment]. So I read [all] three books in 13 days' [P5]

And Participant 13 explained:

> 'I had like 13 years where I was the typical spiritual seeker, and I've read hundreds, if not thousands of books on every spiritual metaphysical topic that seemed interesting at the time' [P1]

Besides documentary sources, some narratives shared accounts of preliminary interactions on online social platforms. For example, Participant 5 recalled that quite early on, 'I arrived at some Internet forum… and that was like the final push for me' [P5]. These sources served as introductory gateways and long-term foundations for spiritual seeking. In addition, participants who provided generalisations explained that spiritual information was often shared and encountered socially; for example, Participant 2 elaborated that to alleviate their affective concerns, 'people [wonder] maybe I should do this meditation, so some people go for yoga, some people go for Realisation; some people go for Non-duality…and in the midst of all of that, going deeper and deeper into the path, they usually find a Guru or a teacher' [P2]. Participant 3 described this mechanism, too, by

explaining that seekers 'are looking in this field, and then these teachings [be]come available in a way, it's all over the world, so much material, and all sorts of teachings … are kind of giving this message of, yes, I can help you [with] what you are seeking' [P3]. As a result, participants explained that seekers gathered additional information through interactions with other people and encounters that may provide a sense of validation.

Several participants also mentioned mystical glimpses as sources of experiential insight and knowledge. For example, when probed for further details, Participant 9 characterised a glimpse as 'a spontaneous opening of [a] curtain or lifting of [a] veil [which] often closes again' [P9]. However, these glimpses did not instil a kind of cognitive certainty usually associated with serendipitous encounters or Aha! Moments, but instead, often served as evidential fragments of how the end of the spiritual search may appear. As a result, Participants 2, 7 and 11 explained that glimpses might sometimes intensify spiritual seeking by imparting further impetus or otherwise temporarily slow it down by providing some relief to the seeking. Therefore, succinctly stated, my participants explained that spiritual seeking involved a variety of information sources such as books, online discussions, spiritual teachers and mystical glimpses. Moreover, they felt that contemporary spiritual information interactions were facilitated through spiritual retreats, meditation classes, yoga classes and online social platforms.

5.5.3.2 Information Interactions

In response to my requests to elaborate on how seekers generally went about searching, several participants described a blend of information practices such as reading and listening and contemplative practices such as praying and meditating. For example, Participant 13 explained that, at first, spiritual seekers might use their most familiar information practices, 'So if people are used to getting information from YouTube videos, then they will look on YouTube perhaps. If they're used to reading books, they'll read books. If they're used to talking to people, they'll talk to people' [P13]. Subsequently, Participant 13 explained that they might learn about contemplative practices and 'through meditation, through prayer, through insights and intuition, they can also get spiritual knowledge this way' [P13]. Similarly, Participant 10 described a melange of techniques that incorporated 'reading books, talking to other seekers, talking to teachers sometimes, maybe trying meditation here and there, trying prayer here and there' [P10]. Therefore, it appeared that contemporary spiritual seeking could amalgamate conventional epistemological inquiry with contemplative and embodied forms of information practice.

5.5.4 How Does Spiritual Seeking Relate to Problem-Solving and Everyday Life Activities?

Several descriptions of spiritual seeking emphasised the normality of the phenomenon. These descriptions drew parallels with other pursuits to illustrate that contemporary spirituality was a 'vaguely delineated domain [P10]' where people sought outcomes that were not dramatically different from other developmental pursuits. Participants 7, 4 and 8, for example, felt:

> 'spirituality says, you don't need a car to be happy, or you don't need a big house to be happy. You can manage to create the same feeling of happiness within you by having the right thoughts, by meditating, by whatever. But it's [seeking] the same thing' [P7]

> 'you could look for things in career or food or entertainment or friendship as well, but you could also look for things in spirituality. So it's simply another form of seeking really, not better or worse' [P4]

> 'going to therapy is the same as going to a spiritual teaching, or a spiritual teacher because both of them are just looking for the same outcome' [P8]

Since these descriptions did not view spiritual seeking as categorically different from similar developmental pursuits, there may be information interactions in other domains with similar concerns but approach them through alternative means. Spiritual seeking may, therefore, reside within a broader framework of similar information interactions with attributes of depth, height and interiority. I discuss this further in the following section.

5.6 Discussion

To discuss the findings from my investigation, I highlight that although spiritual teachers and speakers characterised spiritual seeking as looking for answers to one's problems, they did not describe the search cognitively. Instead, their descriptions of spiritual seeking utilised depth, height and interiority attributes. This relationship also came up in Foreman-Wernet and Dervin (2006; in Dervin et al., 2012), who highlighted spiritual dimensions in art-related information interactions; however, it contrasted with traditional understandings of information, which conceptualise information interactions epistemically, often ignoring their aesthetic dimensions (Ma, 2012).

At first, my participants' descriptions of spiritual seeking as A Search for Something Deeper, A Search for Something Higher and A Search Inward seemed similar enough to deem a conglomeration; however, treating them as separate but interlinked themes helped me understand the attributes of spiritual seeking, that may point more broadly to qualitative aspects of profundity. To explain, in their influential article Information and Higher Things, Kari and Hartel (2007) introduced a pleasurable and profound framework that called for more research into wisdom, virtues, values and human development, spirituality and religion, intuition, ethics and emotions. More than a decade on, although several studies have researched profound things (e.g. Clemens and Cushing, 2010; Latham, 2013; Gorichanaz, 2016; Caidi, 2019; Huttunen and Kortelainen, 2021), a theoretical exposition of the concept of profundity in information science research has not been attempted. Therefore, based on my findings, I offer a preliminary exposition of profundity that may help understand and conceptualise other profound information interactions, such as those in spirituality and contemplation[22].

Kari and Hartel (2007) explained the profound as deep and sublime (p. 1133). In aesthetics, depth is often utilised as a qualitative measure of interactions that imbue a sense of personal meaning. For example, we typically believe that loving differs from attitudes such as liking in terms of depth (Helm, 2021). As a result, meaningful information interactions are often characterised as possessing a degree of depth, and conversely, unmeaningful interactions are depicted as superficial or lacking in depth (e.g. Dunlap et al., 2007; Clemens and Cushing, 2010; Attrill and Jalil, 2011). Moreover, depth also relates to a sense of mystery and illusiveness, which, when unravelled, may invoke an appreciation of underlying complexity and artistic talent (e.g. Schumm, 2004). For these reasons, depth may be seen as an aspect of qualitative profundity; however, as Kari and Hartel note, it is not the only one. In addition to depth, the sublime in Kari and Hartel's 'profound' might possibly be further deconstructed based on my findings as a combination of height and interiority. To explain, in his writings on the beautiful and sublime, Kant described the sublime as that which inspired a sense of awe, wonder and overwhelmingness. Accordingly, he explained sublimity as a feeling of being confronted with something immeasurably greater, transcendent and boundless (Kant 1987). However, at the same time, Kant believed that 'it is in ourselves and our attitude of thought, which introduces sublimity into the representation of nature' (Kant 1987, §23, p. 104). Therefore, for Kant, the sublime did not exist independently of one's subjectivity and way of thinking. Instead, he

[22] The interactions may include, for example, spiritual journalling, pilgrimage and meditation.

believed that sublimity arose through a generative play of opposites by recognising one's powerlessness, mortality or minuteness when confronted with an expansive vastness and somehow still being an individual capable of agency and action. This way, the sublime may be conceived of as a combination of height and interiority. In my study, the participants' distinctions between depth and height, conveyed by the use of opposite spatial metaphors, help convey attempts to move away from positions of unfulfillment along different axes. Simply put, participants used the depth metaphor to describe a search for meaning and purpose, and in contrast, height pointed to an act of transcendence. Accordingly, my analysis helped identify these aspects, revealing that profound interactions might exist within a three-dimensional depth, height and interiority space (see Figure E for an illustration).

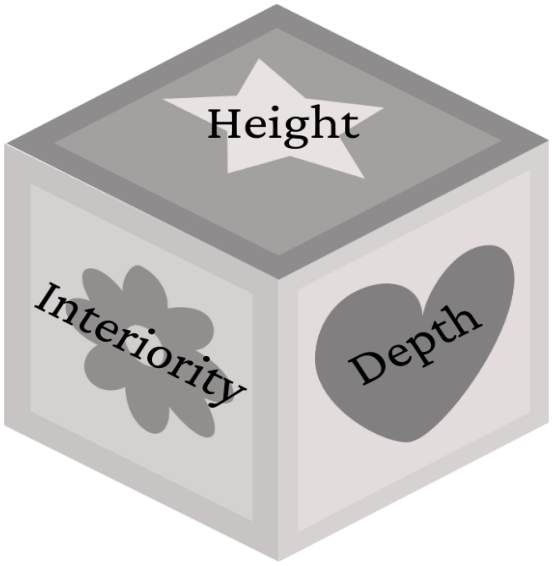


Figure E: Cube of Profundity

Conceptualised in this way, interactions involving one aspect, such as interiority, may be seen as teetering on the edges and vertices of profundity. Moreover, involving two aspects would be traversing over multiple faces, and finally, involving all three aspects would be to occupy the cube in its entirety expansively. This way, although these aspects may overlap, such a conceptualisation would consider that every profound interaction need not possess all three aspects. For example, reflective journalling (in Kari and Hartel's pleasurable and profound classification) may have depth and interiority aspects but may not be trying to attain a transcendent higher state (e.g., in

transcendental meditation). Consequently, I feel that interactions with depth, height and interiority may be considered within a cube of profundity. Moreover, information and interactions within this cube may be theoretically conceived of as profound. I shall discuss this conceptualisation and its possible use in describing relationships between contemplative practices and information in Section 7.2.2; however, for now, the following section concludes this study and provides a link to the next chapter, Study Three: Spiritual Needs and Modern Librarianship.

5.7 Study Conclusion and Link to Chapter 6

This chapter helped examine the role of information in contemporary spiritual-seeking activities in religiously unaffiliated contexts. My participants characterised spiritual seeking as a search for something deeper, a search for something higher, and a search inward. They described spiritual seeking as a persistent long-term endeavour to find an answer to one's problems and explained that contemporary spiritual seekers sought spiritual information as a result of affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns. Moreover, my analysis indicated that spiritual information-seeking interactions incorporated practices such as prayer, yoga and meditation, and these interactions were facilitated through spiritual retreats, meditation classes, yoga classes and online social platforms. To what extent might modern libraries and information institutions support these concerns and interactions? In addition, how do practising librarians feel about spiritual needs in the context of library provision? The following chapter deals with some of these questions to help further this thesis' aim and understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts.

6 Study Three: Spiritual Needs and Modern Librarianship

6.1 Overview

As reviewed in Sections 2.4 and 2.6, scholars have recently envisioned modern libraries as candidate spaces for contemplative and spiritual information provision outside religious organisations (Pyati, 2019; Gorichanaz, 2020); however, practising librarians' views regarding spiritual and religious needs are crucially missing in the literature. To recapitulate, Mross and Riehman-Murphy (2018; 2019; 2021) highlighted that US college students regularly use campus library spaces to pray. In addition, Gorichanaz (2021) explained that the growing interest in contemplative practices and experiences outside traditional religious structures in the US warranted research into possible intersections between libraries and contemplative and spiritual institutions. Moreover, Pyati (2019) argued that public libraries, in accordance with their existing roles, had a part in cultivating their patrons' inner lives and thus were ideal spaces for spiritual and religious information and resource provision. However, Loria (2006) pointed out that many libraries, especially school and state-run, typically considered religious and spiritual literacy issues as low-priority concerns. Collectively, these works sought to understand the place for spirituality and religion in modern libraries and information institutions. But, as Pyati (2019) noted, practising librarians' thoughts, feelings and attitudes about spirituality and religion are unrepresented in the literature (p. 366). Accordingly, this chapter aims to gather and understand practising librarians' attitudes and perceptions regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. I begin with a brief introduction and background to spiritual needs as conceptualised in nursing and healthcare. Next, I elaborate on how I adapted and used a healthcare-based spiritual needs questionnaire to generate my study's data. I then explain how I analysed my responses and present my findings and associated discussions.

6.2 Study Introduction

Academic and public libraries are typically considered secular institutions. However, being housed in free-to-access communal buildings, patrons often use library spaces to meditate, pray, conduct religious meetings and participate in bible study sessions (Mross and Riehman-Murphy, 2018; 2019; 2021). Moreover, with shifting trends from traditional church attendance to more personal and religiously unaffiliated forms of spirituality, spiritual needs and contemplative spiritual practices are also encountered outside formalised religious settings in contemporary North American and Western European culture (Gorichanaz, 2021). Here, the role of libraries in providing spiritual and

religious information and resources is an underexplored question that possibly deserves more empirical attention (Pyati, 2019). To this end, this chapter aims to gather and understand practising librarians' attitudes and perceptions regarding spirituality, spiritual needs and modern library provision. The findings: 1) help understand how librarians view patrons' spiritual needs; 2) provide a sense of how often librarians feel spiritual needs come up at their workplaces; 3) highlight how important librarians feel spiritual needs are to consider in modern librarianship; and 4) help understand some reasons why librarians might feel comfortable or uncomfortable catering to spiritual needs at a modern library or information institution.

6.2.1 Background

Spirituality is a nebulous concept that is often hard to research empirically (McSherry and Cash, 2004). People may describe their spirituality in terms of a sacred or transcendent experience or a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness (Delagran, 2023). In addition, some may find that their spiritual lives are linked to a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue. However, others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Still, others might be spiritual through their connections with art or nature (Delagran, 2023). Therefore, understanding and researching various views on spirituality and religion can be challenging as different people may have varying conceptualisations. Accordingly, researching librarians' views on this topic might benefit from a structure that may help discuss spirituality and religion-related concerns. Outside library research, spirituality has been examined in nursing, healthcare and palliative care contexts (e.g. Murray et al., 2004; Handzo and Koenig, 2004; Delgado, 2005; Hampton et al., 2007; Nixon et al., 2013; Stephenson and Berry, 2015; Nissen et al., 2021). Scholars and practitioners in these disciplines have developed standardised instruments to conceptualise peoples' spiritual and religious concerns and understand how frequently these arise in hospitalised patients and how patients feel about them. These instruments typically take the form of surveys and questionnaires and may prove helpful in collecting practising librarians' views on spirituality by deconstructing it into various spiritual need categorisations. Here, Murray et al. (2004) define spiritual needs as the 'needs and expectations which humans have to find meaning, purpose, and value in their life' and explain that 'such needs can be specifically religious, but even people who have no religious faith or are not the members of an organized religion have belief systems that give their lives meaning and purpose' (p. 40). Accordingly, spiritual needs may be love, belonging and respect-related, such as needs for companionship and connection or more traditionally religious ones, such as praying or

reading spiritual or religious materials. Some examples of healthcare questionnaires that use spiritual need constructs include the Patients' Spiritual Needs Assessment Scale, Spiritual Needs Questionnaire, the Spiritual Needs Survey and Spiritual Needs Assessment for Patients (Monod et al., 2011; Seddigh et al., 2016; Nissen et al., 2020). A particularly helpful one that uses a combination of traditional religious and contemporary spiritual or religiously unaffiliated needs is Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey questionnaire. In this study, I used this questionnaire to gather the data needed to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ6** What are practising librarians' views about spiritual needs?
- **RQ7** What place (if any) do practising librarians feel spiritual needs have in modern library provision?

I elaborate on my rationale behind using such a questionnaire in the following section.

6.3 Study Method and Data Analysis Technique

I used an adapted version of Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey questionnaire to generate the data required for this study. I then embedded the adapted questionnaire within a web-based (Qualtrics) matrix-type questionnaire design. I chose Galek et al.'s questionnaire as it incorporated a combination of traditional and contemporary spiritual constructs. In addition, the questionnaire was easy to adapt as it did not include any healthcare or medical terminology. I elaborate on Galek et al.'s questionnaire, explain my adapted version, the study sample, the analysis method and limitations in the following subsections.

6.3.1 Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey Questionnaire

Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey questionnaire, shown in Fig. F, was created through extensive analysis using twelve qualitative, seven quantitative, and three theoretical studies (Seddigh et al., 2016). The questionnaire consists of 29 spiritual needs categorised into love, belonging and respect; divine; positivity, gratitude, hope and peace; meaning and purpose; morality and ethics; appreciation of beauty; and resolution and death constructs. It then pairs each need with a yes/no question to understand if patients experienced the need whilst hospitalised. And a slightly/moderately/very/extremely scale to gauge how important (or imperative) patients considered the need using self-reported assessments (Galek et al., 2005). For example, a questionnaire may first list the need: to read spiritual or religious material. Patients taking the

questionnaire would then be asked to mark if they had experienced this need whilst in hospital and then select if the need was slightly, moderately, very or extremely important to them.

At any time while you were in the hospital did you have a need:	Yes	No	How important was it to you? Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
1. To review your life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. To be accepted as a person?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. To participate in religious or spiritual services?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. To feel hopeful?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. To find meaning in the suffering?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. To feel a sense of connection with the world?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. To be thankful or grateful?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. To address unmet issues before death?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. For companionship?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. To have someone pray with or for you?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. For peace and contentment?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. To experience or appreciate beauty?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. To find meaning and purpose in life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. For guidance from a power outside yourself?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. To live a moral and ethical life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. To experience or appreciate music?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. To address concerns about life after death?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. To give or receive love?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. To perform religious or spiritual rituals?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. To keep a positive outlook?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. To read spiritual or religious material?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. To talk with someone about death and dying?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. For compassion and kindness?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. For respectful care to your bodily needs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. To experience or appreciate nature?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. To forgive yourself and others?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. To understand why this medical problem occurred?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. To experience a sense of laughter and humor?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Figure F: Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Survey questionnaire snapshot (this is a representation of how the survey is used in nursing; actual needs and constructs were stated in Section 3.3.3.1)

6.3.2 Study Questionnaire Design and Questions

I adapted Galek et al.'s Spiritual Needs Survey questionnaire for my study by excluding two needs[23] and re-presenting the remaining 27 needs in the third person (see Fig. G for a representative snapshot; and appendix: supplementary materials for a copy of the full questionnaire). My adapted questionnaire first asked the following closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire questions as below:

[23] I excluded the needs: 'to understand why you have a medical problem' and 'for guidance from a higher power'. This was because the former was specific to a medical context, and the latter was implicit in the need 'to pray'.

- QQ1) *During your time as a library and information professional, how often have library users, either directly or indirectly, expressed the following spiritual needs? (closed-ended)*
- QQ2) *Is it important for professionals to consider the following spiritual needs when providing resources and services at a library or information centre? (closed-ended)*
- QQ3) *These needs have been studied in positive psychology, nursing and healthcare contexts. Do you think they have a place in library provision? Please provide any personal thoughts or experiences. (open-ended)*

The first question asked respondents how frequently they felt library users/patrons expressed various spiritual needs based on a 27-need list. I asked this question to understand if practising librarians felt spirituality-related needs were ordinarily prevalent at their workplaces. To answer this question, I paired each listed need with an often-occasionally-rarely-never scale-based input option to allow them to select their answers. I listed 27 spiritual needs in 3-4 need clusters; however, I did not indicate the broader constructs, such as love, belonging and respect, associated with each need description to try to ensure the respondents considered each need on its own rather than as a part of a broader construct. Following this, the second question again presented the 27-need list. However, this time, I asked respondents to select how important they felt each need was to consider when providing resources and services as practising librarians. Here, I provided respondents with a definitely yes/perhaps yes/perhaps not/definitely not/no opinion scale-based input option. Finally, I provided respondents with a free-text essay box to gather rich and animated responses for the third question.

Following the first three questions, my questionnaire asked two further questions to collect respondents' library-type experience categories and geographical work location. To focus my study on librarians as professionals rather than lay individuals, I restricted these only to the following demographic questions:

- QQ4) *What kind of libraries have you worked in? (academic, public, school, special, other, none)*
- QQ5) *What country do you currently work in?*

During your time as a library and information professional, how often have library users, either directly or indirectly, expressed the following spiritual needs?

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
To be accepted as a person	○	○	○	○
To give or receive love	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of connection with the world	○	○	○	○
For companionship	○	○	○	○
For kindness and compassion	○	○	○	○
For spiritual care of their bodily needs	○	○	○	○
To experience laughter and a sense of humour	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of peace and contentment	○	○	○	○

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
To perform religious or spiritual rituals	○	○	○	○
To read spiritual or religious material	○	○	○	○
To participate in religious or spiritual services	○	○	○	○
To pray	○	○	○	○
To keep a positive outlook	○	○	○	○
To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect	○	○	○	○
To be thankful or grateful	○	○	○	○
To feel hopeful	○	○	○	○

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
To find meaning in suffering	○	○	○	○
To find meaning and purpose in life	○	○	○	○
To live an ethical or moral life	○	○	○	○
To seek forgiveness	○	○	○	○

Figure G: Snapshot of my study's questionnaire (see Supplementary Materials for Full Version)

6.3.3 Study Sample

I built my account by collecting responses from UK and US librarians, as library professionals in both countries had similar, mutually recognised professional training. After gaining approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee, I administered the survey through the following electronic mailing lists. I chose these because of their high activity and popularity amongst the community of practising library and information professionals. The lists I used were:

1. The American Library Association (ALA) electronic discussion lists (several lists from lists.ala.org)
2. The lis-link Jiscmail list, A general library and information science list for news and discussion in the UK (lis-link@jiscmail.ac.uk)
3. The Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries list abtapl@jiscmail.ac.uk)
4. The lis-research support list intended for librarians in universities, colleges of higher education and research institutions in the UK (lis-researchsupport@jiscmail.ac.uk)
5. The OCLC (founded as the Ohio College Library Centre) global library cooperative list for public librarians publib@oclclists.org)
6. The Canadian Library and Information Science Discussion forum bibcanlib-l@listserv.lac-bac.gc.ca)
7. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) general discussion list for the international library and information community (ifla-l@iflalists.org)
8. The IFLA forum for discussion on Public Library issues (publib@iflalists.org).

6.3.4 Analysis

I used descriptive counts to analyse responses to the closed-ended questions, Q1 and Q2. This type of analysis may ordinarily be considered a quantitative approach; however, in this case, these counts helped me understand how respondents felt about the prevalence of various spiritual needs in their workplaces and whether they felt considering such needs was important by providing them with specific needs to think about. Following this, I thematically analysed the open-ended responses to question Q3.

6.3.5 Limitations

Due to the anonymous and self-selecting nature of the questionnaire response, I cannot claim that the gathered responses form a representative sample of Western librarians or that practising librarians indeed submitted the responses. Instead, the responses indicate librarians' possible attitudes and opinions regarding spiritual needs and library provision. In addition, I disseminated the questionnaire through email lists popular among professionals in two Western countries, USA and UK, and cultural, professional and personal opinions regarding the spiritual may differ in other parts of the world. Therefore my interpretations are limited to USA and UK librarians rather than Western librarianship in general.

6.4 Study Findings

My questionnaire gathered 150 completed responses and 131 partial responses (n=281). Of these, 143 respondents provided their geographical work location, 146 provided answers to library type and experience, 165 provided answers to how often they felt spiritual needs came up at their workplace, 146 answered which spiritual needs (if any) they felt were important to consider as practising librarians, and 126 provided personal thoughts, professional insights and contextual anecdotes. I report my findings in the following subsections beginning with the respondents' work locations.

6.4.1 What Country Do you Currently Work In?

Of those who provided a location, 91 respondents had worked in the USA, 32 worked in the UK, and 6 worked in Canada. Consequently, the questionnaire responses pertain to practising librarians' experiences predominantly in the USA and UK. Additionally, 14 respondents had worked in other Westernised countries worldwide (Ireland, New Zealand, Italy and South Africa). Through mutual recognition statements, the American Library Association recognises librarians from these additional countries (besides Italy) as eligible for employment in the United States. Moreover, responses from librarians who worked in these countries did not dramatically differ from the general result trends. I, therefore, chose to include these additional 14 responses when analysing my data.

6.4.2 What Kind of Libraries Have You Worked In?

Of those who responded to the question on library experience. 114 respondents had worked in academic libraries, 67 in public libraries, 26 in special libraries, 19 in school libraries and 9 in other

libraries. Consequently, the findings represent academic and public library experiences more closely than special and school libraries. In addition, by design, the questionnaire did not aim to gather a representative sample of responses from different library types; moreover, participants typically selected more than one library-type response. Accordingly, the responses to this question exhibit the diversity/range of collected library-type experiences and do not help compare or contrast the general trends between them.

6.4.3 During Your Time as a Library and Information Professional, How Often Have Library Users, Either Directly or Indirectly, Expressed the Following Spiritual Needs?

My first closed-ended questionnaire question (QQ1) aimed to understand if librarians felt spiritual needs were ordinarily prevalent at their workplaces. 165 librarians responded to this question by selecting how frequently (i.e., often, occasionally, rarely or never) they encountered each of the 27 listed spiritual needs from their patrons. My questionnaire provided respondents with a list of needs, not the broader constructs associated with each need; however, in analysing my findings, I used the broader constructs to understand and frame the respondents' views. The responses to this question (shown in Table 2) indicated that librarians felt spiritual needs were prevalent at their workplaces but that patrons expressed some needs significantly more often than others. To elaborate, the respondents felt patrons expressed needs associated with love, belonging and respect and positivity, gratitude, hope and peace more often than those related to the divine, meaning and purpose, morality, and ethics. In addition, most respondents felt patrons expressed a need for quiet spaces to meditate or reflect more often than reading religious or spiritual materials. Librarians viewed the need for kindness & compassion as patrons' most frequently expressed spiritual need, and finally, most respondents felt patrons rarely expressed needs related to death and resolution.

Construct	Spiritual Need	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Love/belonging/respect	For kindness and compassion	71	59	25	10
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To keep a positive outlook	61	61	25	17
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To experience laughter and a sense of humour	56	72	17	20
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect	48	65	33	18
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To feel a sense of peace and contentment	48	64	31	22
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To feel hopeful	47	62	28	26
Love/belonging/respect	To feel a sense of connection with the world	47	64	30	24

Construct	Spiritual Need	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Love/belonging/respect	For companionship	44	65	36	20
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate music	43	62	28	31
Love/belonging/respect	To be accepted as a person	41	61	32	31
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To be thankful or grateful	39	58	42	24
Divine	To read spiritual or religious material	37	70	32	26
Meaning and purpose	To find meaning and purpose in life	36	63	25	40
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate nature	29	58	38	39
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate beauty	29	61	30	44
Morality and ethics	To live an ethical or moral life	24	59	38	42
Divine	To pray	20	46	46	52
Resolution/death	To review their life	18	49	49	47
Love/belonging/respect	To give or receive love	15	45	61	44
Divine	To perform religious or spiritual rituals	13	50	41	61
Meaning and purpose	To find meaning in suffering	12	40	49	63
Divine	To participate in religious or spiritual services	11	44	48	62
Love/belonging/respect	For spiritual care of their bodily needs	9	29	57	67
Resolution/death	To have a deeper understanding of death	8	41	41	73
Resolution/death	To address concerns about life after death	6	43	48	66
Resolution/death	To seek forgiveness	5	35	49	74
Resolution/death	To address unmet issues before death	4	34	40	85

Table 2: During your time as a library and information professional, how often have library users, either directly or indirectly, expressed the following spiritual needs [responses]

6.4.4 Is It Important for Professionals To Consider the Following Spiritual Needs When Providing Resources and Services at a Library or Information Centre?

My second closed-ended questionnaire question (QQ2) aimed to understand if librarians felt spiritual needs were important to consider in their workplaces. Again, my questionnaire provided respondents with a list of 27 needs, not the broader constructs associated with each need; however, in analysing my findings, I used the broader constructs to understand and frame the respondents' opinions. 146 librarians responded to this question by selecting if they felt a need was definitely important, perhaps important/unimportant and definitely not important to consider as a practising

librarian (besides the option of having no opinion). The responses to this question (shown in Table 3) indicated that librarians generally felt particular needs were more important than others; however, there were no spiritual needs that librarians unanimously considered unimportant. On average, respondents felt that needs associated with love, belonging, respect, positivity, gratitude, hope and peace were more important to consider than those associated with the divine and death and resolution, which was similar to their views on spiritual need prevalence amongst patrons in the previous questionnaire question (see Table 2 earlier). Most responses deemed the need to read spiritual or religious materials as somewhat important but not a top priority in library provision, which also mirrored how they felt about the prevalence of this need amongst their patrons in Table 2 earlier. However, most respondents felt the need to participate in and perform spiritual or religious services and rituals as the least important to consider, even though many believed such needs were somewhat prevalent amongst patrons (see Table 2 earlier). Respondents generally felt that the need to be accepted as a person was the top need to consider. In contrast, the need to pray received the most divided response, indicating that librarians may be ambivalent regarding such a provision.

Construct	Spiritual Need	Definitely yes	Perhaps yes	Perhaps not	Definitely not	No opinion
Love/belonging/respect	To be accepted as a person	111	27	2	2	4
Love/belonging/respect	For kindness and compassion	107	34	2	0	3
Love/belonging/respect	To feel a sense of connection with the world	84	48	9	2	3
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To keep a positive outlook	81	50	7	1	7
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To experience laughter and a sense of humour	73	62	5	2	4
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To feel hopeful	72	54	9	3	8

Construct	Spiritual Need	Definitely yes	Perhaps yes	Perhaps not	Definitely not	No opinion
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect	71	58	7	3	7
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To be thankful or grateful	61	60	10	5	10
Positivity/gratitude/ hope/peace	To feel a sense of peace and contentment	60	71	9	2	4
Morality and ethics	To live an ethical or moral life	59	57	10	9	11
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate music	57	61	14	4	10
Divine	To read spiritual or religious material	55	55	17	14	5
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate beauty	55	66	10	4	11
Appreciation of beauty	To experience or appreciate nature	50	61	19	4	12
Meaning and purpose	To find meaning and purpose in life	49	67	10	8	12
Love/belonging/respect	For companionship	42	63	24	11	6
Resolution/death	To review their life	32	59	25	11	19
Love/belonging/respect	To give or receive love	29	71	26	12	8
Divine	To pray	28	48	33	26	11
Resolution/death	To have a deeper understanding of death	28	51	35	16	16
Resolution/death	To address unmet issues before death	23	46	37	21	19
Resolution/death	To seek forgiveness	22	49	33	22	20
Meaning and purpose	To find meaning in suffering	21	57	29	18	21

Construct	Spiritual Need	Definitely yes	Perhaps yes	Perhaps not	Definitely not	No opinion
Resolution/death	To address concerns about life after death	20	49	37	22	18
Love/belonging/respect	For spiritual care of their bodily needs	17	49	45	20	15
Divine	To perform religious or spiritual rituals	12	42	44	41	7
Divine	To participate in religious or spiritual services	11	41	45	41	8

Table 3: Is it important for professionals to consider the following spiritual needs when providing resources and services at a library or information centre? [responses]

6.4.5 These Needs Have Been Studied in the Contexts of Positive Psychology, Nursing and Healthcare. Do You Think They Have a Place in Library Provision?

This was an open-ended question that 126 librarians answered. Each respondent answered this question differently; some responses were one to two paragraphs long, and others were shorter two-three sentence responses. However, most librarians began by providing personal and professional views vis-a-vis the 27 spiritual needs listed in the first two questionnaire questions. Following this, some librarians provided rationalisations for or against considering spiritual needs at their workplaces, and some shared anecdotes of providing various spirituality-related information and services to their patrons. I analysed these responses thematically. The first two themes (subsections 6.4.5.1 and 6.4.5.2 below) relate to librarians' views regarding the spiritual needs in question, and the following two themes (subsections 6.4.5.3 and 6.4.5.4) interpret librarians' rationalisations for or against considering spiritual needs in modern library provision. I elaborate on these below.

6.4.5.1 Spirituality and Community, Diversity, Culture, Humanness and Tolerance

The first thematic category of responses generally associated the 27 listed spiritual needs with ideas of community, diversity, tolerance, humanness and culture. To explain, several academic, public and school librarians cited community, diversity and tolerance as core librarianship values and believed that spiritual needs were intrinsic to these broader categorisations. For example, responding to

whether spiritual needs were appropriate at a library, one respondent said: "Yes. Spiritual needs should definitely have a place in library provision. One of our ideals in a library is a sense of community. There is no reason spirituality should not be included in the community we strive for. We even discuss the tolerance/inclusiveness of different cultures, beliefs, and worldviews in our service". Similarly, another said: "I believe the spiritual health of individuals is important to consider in a public sphere such as a library. [As] diverse opinions make up what is most important about library service". And a third stated: "As our workplaces become more diverse in every sense of the word with staff and library patrons we serve, it is important to keep in mind what role (s) spirituality and faith plays in a person's life". Accordingly, many librarians who felt comfortable catering to patrons' spiritual needs viewed spirituality as embedded within the broader needs of their patron communities or cultures. In addition, some librarians' responses associated spirituality with being human. One, for example, felt that spiritual needs had "a place in the sense that we [librarians] are working with humans with varied experiences and perspectives, and our patrons bring their whole selves to us". And another explained, "kindness, compassion, helpfulness, interpersonal interest are universal human values imbedded [sic] within spiritual expressions". However, some librarians believed spiritual needs were more socially appropriate to consider during traditional spiritual and religious calendar months; for example, one academic librarian felt that it was "important for the library to consider their community's spiritual needs [primarily] when planning events (for example— no events on Easter or interfering with Hanukah, cutting back on food-related events on days of fasting such as Good Friday, or in Ramadan)". And another felt "Dietary lifestyles, daily prayers/meditation, other rituals and holidays [were] just one example of the importance of spirituality [in library provision]". Such views also related spirituality to the needs of particular communities; however, they underscored practicality and neutrality when delivering programming and services not to favour any particular category of patrons (I shall discuss neutrality more in section 6.4.5.3). These views, therefore, corresponded to librarians' attitudes regarding spiritual need prevalence and importance highlighted by the first two questionnaire questions (see Tables 1 and 2 earlier), as most librarians there signalled the need for kindness and compassion as the most prevalent and the need to be accepted as a person as most important to consider.

6.4.5.2 Spirituality and Psychological Health and Wellbeing

In addition to diversity and tolerance, a second thematic category of responses associated the 27 listed spiritual needs with psychological health and wellbeing. Here, some responses related spiritual needs to psychological needs straightforwardly. For example, one response claimed, "There is a definite place [for these needs] in library provision, especially since mental health is such a huge topic in today's generation". And another emphasised that "Many of these [needs]—including love, finding purpose and meaning, are important social-emotional skills that are important to develop in young children". In addition, one librarian felt their workplace usually catered to the listed spiritual needs by providing "a positive mental health boost to regular users as well as a means of feeling part of a community rather than isolated". Accordingly, these responses associated spiritual needs with patrons' general mental health and wellbeing needs. However, besides general wellbeing, some respondents also believed spirituality and associated needs became more apparent in patrons during poor health and psychological distress. Some librarians provided anecdotes to indicate this; for example, one said, "During examinations and submissions of thesis, assignments, etc., students always discuss their hopes to succeed and request their librarians to keep them in prayer. [In addition], some students who experienced trauma during their studying also seek advice, companionship, and comfort from librarians, especially if they formed some sort of bonds with their librarians". And another recalled an experience where "a student who came to me asking if I had books for children about death since she had experienced a recent loss and was struggling with it. I found her several picture books that dealt with death and dying, and she seemed very relieved". These responses linked spiritual needs with patrons' personal needs and circumstances. Some, however, also linked spiritual needs with patrons' health-based academic interests. For instance, librarians catering to university nursing and psychology departments and those based in larger healthcare institutions felt their patrons often researched spirituality-related topics in death and palliative care contexts. One stated: "I work at a college library, and I do know that the nursing students research some of these topics, such as death and dying". And another explained, "I've worked in healthcare library services for most of my professional life (6 in total), and in some roles, we have, for example, held copies of documents and guidance produced by the hospital chaplaincy; palliative care and counselling books have formed part of the collection". Overall, this theme received less attention in librarians' open-ended responses than the community, diversity, culture, humanness and tolerance theme discussed earlier. This is also reflected in librarians' responses to questionnaire questions one and two, where,

on average, respondents rated needs related to meaning and purpose and appreciation of beauty and the divine as less prevalent and important than belonging and respect-related needs (see Tables 1 and 2 again).

6.4.5.3 Setting Boundaries, Treading Cautiously and Keeping It Professional

While the first two themes concerned librarians' views about the 27 spiritual needs listed in previous questionnaire questions, the third theme I generated interpreted librarians' thoughts on why they were comfortable or uncomfortable with supporting spiritual needs in a library setting. Here, most librarians who indicated they were uncomfortable addressing patrons' spiritual needs at their workplaces explained that doing so might overstep personal and professional boundaries. For example, one stated: "My feeling is that we are a secular institution, so I am hesitant to get too deep into spiritual issues with patrons". Similarly, another explained, "I can point out where [patrons] can seek help and guidance at college and whom to speak [to], but I don't consider this is my role". And another vehemently stated: "This is absolutely not something libraries should be concerned about. We cannot and should not strive to be all things to all people. It dilutes our real mission. We can teach people to locate, evaluate and find information. If they want to use that knowledge to study mythology, that's up to them". However, most librarians that were comfortable catering to patrons' spiritual needs also cited a need to tread cautiously, set up boundaries and keep things professional. For example, one respondent believed that "mindfulness and meditation can be especially helpful for EVERYONE if it focuses on the secular benefits. [As] Many distrust 'religious' language from prior past bad experiences or dogma". Similarly, another felt "librarians should be sensitive to patron needs and emotional state, to be sympathetic but without personal involvement or attachments". A third believed, "these types of spiritual/religious needs deserve the same consideration by libraries as user needs involving any other subject area … that being said, I do think that publicly funded libraries need to be careful about providing actual religious services as part of their services/programming, as this could be viewed as an endorsement of religion". And a fourth admitted they were "not sure, we honor all our students' spirituality but also want to create an open and inviting environment which means hosting services would be uninviting to non-religious students". Therefore, these respondents felt some spiritual needs might be appropriate to consider in a library setting; however, they qualified this by suggesting that librarians must exercise caution and dispassion when dealing with sensitive topics such as spirituality and religion. In addition to being cautious, a second group of responses under this theme emphasised neutrality and balance

by not being biased towards particular religious faiths or traditions and aligning with the faith of majority patrons where appropriate. Here, one librarian who felt comfortable catering to spiritual needs also felt "it would be best for the library to maintain a balanced approach that does not clearly favor one philosophy or religion over others". And another explained, "When I do collection development, I work very hard to find books and movies on similar topics that encompass several disparate perspectives, secular and religious in relevant cases, and I always try to find viewpoints that are more reflective of what average believers might recognize. Books by scholars on Islam and Judaism, for example, may not reflect the lived experience of a believer, and a book about Catholics by a Protestant may not accurately reflect their worldview". These respondents felt confident in their abilities to provide resources and materials for patrons' spiritual needs but also wished to maintain professionalism and correctness. Finally, a third group of respondents under this theme were comfortable catering to spiritual needs but unsure of their professional capabilities and training. One respondent, for example, hesitated: "I'm torn on the issue because, while kindness, compassion, humor, and connectedness are in short supply, and are things libraries/librarians can put forth, the other aspects are not really within our job range (as of yet) and I'm not sure we can provide them adequately". Similarly, another believed most librarians "do try to take care of our patrons, but we aren't trained in psychology, social work, nursing, and related fields. We could do more harm than good". And a third hoped that in addressing patrons' spiritual needs, librarians could "walk the fine line between being neutral parties there to support patrons in their information needs and fellow humans who recognize that their needs might go beyond our [librarians'] own competence and worldviews and try to shore up that difference in library-appropriate ways". Therefore, most respondents under this theme, whether comfortable or uncomfortable with addressing spiritual needs in library provision, felt that such needs required careful consideration.

6.4.5.4 Keeping it Practical and Contextual

A final theme I generated related to responses that indicated spiritual needs were no different from any other kind of need in that addressing such needs, librarians should consider overall library context (e.g., library type and institutional affiliation) and practical issues. Here, some respondents shared professional anecdotes to highlight contextual appropriateness. For example, a librarian at a religiously affiliated institution shared: "I currently work as a librarian in a Christian school. While there are other school programs that are designed specifically for the spiritual needs of our students, there are a lot of opportunities to serve the spiritual needs of our patrons inside the

library". Similarly, in the context of a theological library, another explained, "As a former circulation assistant in a theological library, information needs were usually more than purely academic. Thinking about different contexts, answering reference questions and effectively connecting patrons with resources may benefit from a deeper cultural/spiritual awareness among library staff to properly serve patron needs". And another respondent speaking against spiritual need provision explained, "A business library or a law library might not be expected to cater to this particular aspect of their users' information needs (they are specialist services); and an academic library will cater to the courses taught and researched at that institution, which might or might not encompass health care, psychology, theology, philosophy or other disciplines for which spirituality is a core concern". These responses highlighted that some librarians felt institutional relevance or irrelevance was essential when considering provisions for spiritual needs. However, several respondents also emphasised contextual factors in referring to the needs of particular spiritual/religious patron populations. For example, speaking as a university or college librarian, one respondent explained, "I have worked in a library that had a large Muslim community, and I wish there had a been an area that specially designate [sic] so that people could quietly interact with their faith without having to ask permission to gain access to such an area". Another shared a personal interaction: "I was once dismayed when I interrupted a woman praying by opening a movable wall. I waited for her to finish and then apologized, and I asked her to work with me to identify a suitable place where she and other women students could pray without fear of interruption". Another provided anecdotes of Muslim students' spirituality-related library use by sharing: "The Islamic Student Association [asked us] to provide a space in the Library for students to pray during the day, so we created a reflection room for prayer and meditation". And another speaking more generally to the multi-faith aspect of modern campuses highlighted, "Having come across students praying in the Library in the corridor or on the stairwell I think the institution should create a safe space for all to pray and reflect should they wish". These responses indicated that some librarians also believed contextual factors, such as the practical needs and demands of particular spiritual groups or student communities, influenced whether spiritual needs were appropriate to consider in libraries. However, besides practicality and institutional affiliation, a third type of response under this theme emphasised wider social contextual factors. To explain, some librarians believed that spiritual and religious needs were outside the purview of public and academic libraries as these were secular spaces. However, they conceded that due to social and campus dynamics, libraries often became defacto places for people's spiritual practices and needs.

Speaking of the public library sphere, one respondent clarified that "[Spiritual needs] do have a place because libraries provide a community space that seeks to meet a range of needs within that community, as well as a safe place for people to express themselves". Another explained, "As public libraries change and progress, with more and more patrons using public libraries for social services/community services resources, I think it is worth considering that patrons may seek to fulfill or explore spiritual needs there". And speaking of the academic and university sphere, a third highlighted that "the academic library is often the heart of campus and the place students turn to when there is nowhere else to meet their needs. For example, our Muslim students couldn't find a quiet, private place on campus to pray, so they often ended up in hallways in the library". Overall, responses under this theme indicated that librarians believed contextual factors such as institution type and affiliation, practical issues and social factors affected whether spiritual needs had a place in modern librarianship.

6.5 Discussion

The open-ended responses, connected with the closed-ended ones, help provide some answers to RQ6 and RQ7 (stated in 6.2.1 earlier).

Regarding librarians' views, responses to my questionnaire signalled that most practising librarians associated spiritual needs with broader social ideas such as community, diversity and culture. Consequently, as analysed in Section 6.4.5, many tended to link the consideration of spiritual needs with attitudes such as acceptance, tolerance, inclusiveness, care and connection. In addition, some respondents felt spiritual needs were related to provisions for patrons' wellbeing and psychological health. As a result, librarians who regarded their workplaces as comforting spaces, well-being hubs, and places for individual growth felt these needs were important to consider in modern librarianship. However, my analysis of the closed-ended responses (provided in Sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.4) indicates that many did not consider overt religious practices or rituals as important to provide for, even though they felt patrons occasionally expressed such needs and expectations. Accordingly, most respondents signalled that provisions for a quiet space for meditation & reflection were more important than prayer-related provisions (see Table 3).

This opinion, at first, may seem different between academic and public librarians, as many academic librarians, in their open-ended responses, emphasised that student patrons often needed a designated space to pray in; however, when I compared respondents' text-based inputs to the

respective reported importance levels, several librarians who shared accounts of student patrons' prayer-related requirements, too, rated meditation and reflection spaces as more important than prayer. Therefore, practising librarians might be more comfortable providing resources and services for secularised practices, such as mindfulness-based meditation and stress reduction but not for overtly religious ones, such as prayer or reading religious materials (see Table 3 again). In addition, since many respondents marked significant events and end-of-life-related spiritual needs, such as those concerning death and resolution, as least prevalent and important, although people may have spiritual needs in these circumstances, they may not look to libraries or librarians to help deal with them; moreover, librarians may not wish to engage with patrons on death and afterlife-related spiritual topics in general. Accordingly, to speak to Pyati's (2019) question: are librarians comfortable making room for patrons' existential and spiritual needs? Practising librarians may be more comfortable providing resources and services for needs related to love, belonging, respect, positivity, gratitude, hope and peace rather than those related to the divine or death and resolution (for specific need details, see Tables 2 & 3).

6.6 Study Conclusion and Prelude to Part Three

This chapter gathered and analysed practising US and UK librarians' views regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. Part Three begins with Chapter 7: General Discussion, which answers research questions 1 to 7. In addition, it triangulates and integrates the insights created by Studies One, Two and Three and relates the findings to the broader information behaviour literature. I begin by briefly revisiting the thesis's aim (stated in Section 0.1) in the next chapter.

Part Three

General Discussion

Thesis Conclusion, Contributions and Future Outlook

7 General Discussion

Part Two presented three interpretivistic investigations to help examine the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. This chapter combines insights from these studies and interprets their findings in light of previous research. In addition, it discusses the findings' boundaries and research avenues created by this thesis. I begin by revisiting the thesis aim outlined in Chapter 0: Thesis Introduction.

7.1 Thesis aim revisited

As outlined in Section 0.1, this thesis aimed to understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts. To do so, I conducted three interpretivistic investigations to understand 1) the motivations and information interactions of fifteen contemplative spiritual retreat residents, 2) insights of thirteen contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers about people's spiritual seeking concerns & patterns, and 3) two hundred and eighty-one US and UK practising librarians' views and attitudes regarding spiritual needs and modern library provision. Each investigation had particular objectives and research questions that helped me create the necessary epistemic outputs to achieve my overall aim. Accordingly, I presented findings, discussions, and preliminary answers to research questions RQ1-RQ7 in Parts One and Two. In the following subsections, I consolidate these answers by triangulating and interpreting them in light of the existing spiritual and religious information research literature.

7.1.1 Answer to Research Question 1

The spirituality and religion-related literature review presented in Part One related to the following research question:

- RQ1 How have scholars explored religion and spirituality within information research, and what are the gaps in the current literature?

As discussed in Section 2.2, my review aimed to understand how scholars have explored spirituality and religion collectively and possibly as divergent concepts; accordingly, I shall discuss my findings and answer RQ1 using religion and spirituality categories and subsequently highlight the gaps in the following subsections:

7.1.1.1 Religion-Related Information Research

I classified research titles that used spirituality, spiritual, religion and religious without distinction as religion-related literature, as explained in Section 2.2 earlier. Here, scholars have explored religion broadly as part of information and communication studies, museum studies and library research. I categorised the information and communication studies literature into Internet studies and information behaviour research domains. However, the museum studies and library research literature, I reviewed together. My review indicates that in Internet studies, scholars have researched people's online interactions in established and alternative or New Age religious contexts. In both contexts, scholars have investigated how online content is presented, consumed and shared by religious organisations (e.g., The Church of Scientology and The Vatican) and lay religious individuals (e.g., those surfing the internet for religious and spiritual matters). Here, research concerning religious organisations suggests that such organisations provide information primarily for one-to-many interaction purposes, while lay individuals seek and share information online to build religious communities and participate in conventional and alternative religious discussions. In these cases, the Internet helps provide a helpful communication channel to organisations and individuals; however, being an unregulated space, it also supports diverse and deviant opinions and may, in addition, potentially undermine traditional religious authority structures (Bunt, 1997; 2000; Helland, 2000; Lövheim, 2004; Berger and Ezzy, 2004 Campbell and Golan, 2011; Tomalin, Starkey and Halafoff, 2015; Campbell and Garner, 2016). In information behaviour, scholars have similarly researched professionals' practices and behaviours and those of lay Christian, Muslim and Buddhist individuals; however, unlike Internet studies, information behaviour scholars are yet to explore unestablished, alternative or New Age contexts and traditions. Information behaviour studies generally indicate that religious professionals prefer to cultivate their information sources personally rather than seeking help from libraries or information professionals; however, this might also depend on socio-economic contexts and professionals' geographical location. In addition, religious professionals may utilise prayer as an information-seeking strategy and their religious commitments and associated lifestyle (e.g., being celibate) may also affect their information practices and behaviours (Phillips, 1992; Tanner, 1993; Wicks, 1999; Roland, 2008; 2012; Lambert, 2010; Curran and Burns, 2011; Michels, 2011; 2012; 2014; Bakar and Saleh, 2011; Saleh and Bakar, 2013; Saleh and Sadiq, 2013; Dankasa, 2015). In contrast, information behaviour studies of lay Christians, Muslims and Buddhists suggest that spiritual information seeking is relatively common and everyday spiritual information behaviour and practices may incorporate documentary

information sources, embodiment, and contemplative-practice-related interactions (Baker, 2004; Fourie, 2008; Quirke, 2012; Wan-Chik, Clough and Sanderson, 2013; Cadge and Bergey, 2013; Gorichanaz, 2016; Gaston, Dorner and Johnstone, 2015; Guzik, 2017; 2018; Chabot, 2019; Caidi, 2019).

In galleries, libraries, archives and museum studies, religion is somewhat under-researched. Here, museum and gallery scholars have signalled the prevalence of implicit religiosity and questioned if and how religious objects should be appropriately housed and displayed inside modern secular galleries and museums (Duncan, 1995; 2005; Buggeln, 2012; Paine, 2012; Alderton, 2014; Buggeln, Paine and Plate, 2017). Some, for example, Buggeln (2012), believe that the appropriateness of religious behaviours in museums is contingent on context and museum professionals' ideas and views, whereas others, like Alderton (2014), feel that state-run institutions must consciously refrain from housing explicitly religious artefacts and installations. Library researchers, on the other hand, have highlighted the possible implications of neglecting religion in Western literacy and education systems, such as by discussing religious information poverty-related issues; and the role of state and school-run libraries in providing religious literacy by examining if and how library-supported religious literacy programmes might promote intercultural understanding and reduce delinquent social behaviours (Loria, 2006; Onyebuchi, 2022).

7.1.1.2 Spirituality-Related Information Research

Research titles that used the terms spirituality and spiritual rather than religion, I classified as spirituality-related as I felt these works implicitly or explicitly distinguished between spirituality and religion. Accordingly, my review indicates that spirituality in information research has been little explored compared with religion. Here, scholars have stressed that spirituality can be an important factor in information evaluation and use and that spiritual information interaction might distinctly relate to contemplative information aims rather than conventionally-understood epistemic ones alone (Kari, 2009; 2011a; 2011b; Gorichanaz and Latham, 2019; Latham et al., 2020;).

Likewise, galleries, libraries, archives and museum research scholars have explored spirituality less than religion. In museum studies, scholars have highlighted that spiritual and numinous experience-seeking can significantly influence people's museum visits and motivations (Cameron and Gatewood, 2003; Gatewood and Cameron, 2004; Latham, 2013). Similarly, library scholars have empirically examined students' spirituality-related practices, such as prayer, yoga, mindfulness and

meditation, to identify that students and patrons often use libraries for their spiritual needs and expectations (Mross and Riehman-Murphy, 2018; 2019; 2021; Samson, 2021). In addition, some have conceptualised public libraries as ideal candidates for contemplative and spiritual need provisions outside traditional, religious, privatised and paywalled systems. Moreover, others have proposed alternative institutional arrangements, such as an Information Sanctuary, to combine conventional epistemic and contemplative information resource provisions (Pyati, 2019; Gorichanaz, 2021).

7.1.1.3 Current Gaps

The gaps in information behaviour vis-a-vis spirituality and religion generally relate to information interactions outside the Christian religious tradition and professional religious contexts and work-related interactions. In addition, missing also are studies concerning interactions in New Age, religiously unaffiliated spirituality, and indigenous and folk traditions. In library research, very few studies have examined religious and spiritual issues. Accordingly, the gaps in library research relate to fundamental conceptions of the place of spirituality and religion in modern secular libraries and if and how spiritual needs should be supported in public, academic and state-run systems.

7.1.2 Answers to Research Questions 2 and 3

Study One: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making (presented in Part Two, Chapter 4) was related to and addressed the following research questions:

- RQ2 What motivates people to engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?
- RQ3 What information phenomena surround residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre?

To answer these questions, I analysed fifteen spiritual retreat residents' meaning-making narratives to understand their motivations and identify information-related phenomena, such as information sources, interactions and outcomes. I now provide answers to these research questions and discuss them as follows:

7.1.2.1 Answer to RQ2 (What motivates people to engage in a contemplative spiritual retreat?)

Spiritual retreat residents' motivations comprised 'something missing', 'significant events', 'gradual changes in worldview', 'mystical glimpses' and 'desire for spiritual knowledge' narrative groups. A common denominator across many of these groups was affective states or emotions. To explain, the

residents wished to overcome negative affective states such as unhappiness, distress and unfulfillment associated with the sense of something missing, significant events, and gradual worldview change. Moreover, in the case of mystical glimpses, the residents wished to re-attain somehow the positive affective states they had once glimpsed but lost ever since. Therefore, I believe that the residents were primarily seeking affective outcomes[24] from their information interactions, and such affective-outcome-seeking desires motivated them to reside at the centre, participate in the contemplative spiritual retreat and seek spiritual guidance. As discussed in section 2.3.2.2, Chabot's (2019) study of Western Buddhists' religious information practices also indicated that spiritual individuals sought information for affective reasons, such as a desire to achieve a 'good' death, be happier and help others avoid sadness and suffering (p. 109). Chabot did not refer to these as affective concerns and instead used the terms existential and spiritual; however, I feel affective is arguably better as it helps locate spiritual and religious concerns within existing better-articulated and supportable biologically-based need conceptualisations. Moreover, as seen in the 'significant events' narrative group case, motivations for spiritual information interaction can also arise when trying to make sense of distressful, ill-health or end-of-life situations (also identified by Baker 2004; Fourie 2008). Here Cadge and Bergey's (2013) work reviewed earlier (see section 2.3.2.2) shows that individuals' spiritual information interactions might also involve frustration and anger-related motivations, which too may be considered affective phenomena. Therefore, I feel 'affective-outcome-seeking' better captures the residents' motivations for residing at the retreat *and* seeking and using spiritual information.

7.1.2.2 Answer to RQ3 (What information phenomena surround residents at a contemplative spiritual retreat centre?)

Information phenomena at the retreat centre included information sources, interactions and outcomes. To elaborate, the residents used various information sources, such as books, online videos, online retreats, and mobile applications, before and possibly after residing at the retreat centre. However, whilst in residence, the resident teacher or Guru appeared to be their primary spiritual information source. The residents interacted with the Guru through formal and informal interactions, and these interactions led to affective and contemplative information outcomes. The formal interactions, or Satsangs, were akin to group therapy sessions in which the residents sought

[24] The term affect commonly refers to emotions but can also include feeling, mood, and sentiment-related processes at a corporeal level (Mazzarella, 2012).

the Guru's guidance to help negotiate problems related to the affective-outcome-seeking concerns stated earlier. By analysing videos of the Satsang sessions, I identified that in most cases, the Guru effectively directed residents to carry out silent meditation and contemplation rather than attempting to deal with their problems through habitual cognitive sensemaking. This way, I feel the Guru encouraged the residents to cultivate a kind of deliberate information 'non-practice' by participating in seated meditation and silent contemplation (I shall define information non-practice in section 7.2.2.3). Consequently, by doing so, some residents claimed to achieve flashes of insight—contemplative outcomes, while others managed to improve their long-term wellbeing and emotional health—affective outcomes. As a comparison, Chabot's (2019) study proposed viewing meditation as a type of information practice comparable to conventional practices such as listening and reading (p. 86). However, he also distinguished between analytical and placement-type meditation (p. 88). Here, he described the former as meditating 'on' something, i.e., akin to conceptual thinking, and the latter as a form of meditation where one is seated and focused uniquely on the task of meditation (p. 88). Accordingly, I feel this latter type of meditation resembles the Satsang sessions' silent contemplation activity, while the former resembles the introspective elements. Moreover, since silent contemplation, like Chabot's placement meditation, involves a deliberate attempt to *not think* by focusing on the meditation task rather than building conceptual understanding through habit, I feel it is better characterised as an information non-practice rather than a practice. In addition, I feel the term practice rather than behaviour is more appropriate here, as the residents appear to use silent contemplation to attempt to disrupt their habitual sensemaking patterns and replace them with a contemplative regularity or norm. Therefore, succinctly stated, residents at the retreat centre in question were typically surrounded by documentary and personal information sources, of which the Guru was the primary information source; they engaged in formal and informal information interactions; attempted to cultivate information non-practice; and finally, their interactions typically resulted in affective and contemplative outcomes.

7.1.3 Answers to Research Questions 4 and 5

Following Study One, Study Two: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking, presented in Chapter 5, related to the following research questions:

- RQ4 How do contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers explain spiritual seeking?
- RQ5 What are the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking?

As explained in Chapter 3: General Research Design-A Reflexive Account, I chose to examine spiritual seeking as several residents in Study One described their activities in search-related terms; moreover, the retreat centre described itself as a modern-day monastery for 'mature seekers'. Accordingly, I constructed descriptions of spiritual seeking through semi-structured online interviews with contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers to answer questions RQ4 and RQ5. I then analysed my participants' interview responses and their insights regarding spiritual seekers' concerns and spiritual-seeking patterns. I provide my answers to RQ4 and RQ5 as follows:

7.1.3.1 Answer to RQ4 (How do contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers explain spiritual seeking?)

Contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers typically explained spiritual seeking using depth, height and interiority-related terms. To elaborate, some teachers and speakers used 'height' to characterise spiritual seeking as a search for a transcendent higher state or spiritual enlightenment described in some Eastern religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Here, teachers and speakers explained that although contemporary spiritual seekers were possibly religiously unaffiliated, many were still influenced by religious ideas of transcendence and consequently sought guidance from spiritual and religious sources in hopes of attaining such outcomes. Next, some teachers and speakers explained spiritual seeking as a search for deeper life meaning and substance within spirituality and religion. Accordingly, they used 'depth' to emphasise spiritual seeking as searching for a sense of fulfilment beyond everyday concerns and mundane interactions. Gorichanaz and Latham's (2019) conceptual framework in Contemplative Aims for Information (reviewed in section 2.5) also includes meaning as an essential component of contemplative and spiritual information interactions. Their paper, too, characterises personal identity and life purpose-related interactions as personally meaningful. However, my participants' explanations of spiritual seeking as looking for something deeper, I feel, also convey ideas of substance, i.e., analogous to interactions that might involve wisdom rather than data, knowledge or information. Consequently, depth, in my opinion, better captures both meaning and substance-related aspects of spiritual-seeking interactions. Finally, some teachers and speakers used 'interiority' to characterise spiritual seeking as an inward search to understand and manipulate one's subjective thoughts and life interpretations. Interiority is also alluded to in Gorichanaz and Latham's (2019) framework through aspects such as attention and compassion. However, in addition to developing a kind of compassionate self-awareness, my participants' explanations of spiritual seeking as a search inward, I feel, also signal an attempt to understand and manipulate one's psychological thought

processes to ultimately have better experiences by 'having the right thoughts' even during uncomfortable circumstances. Accordingly, interiority helps indicate an inward-looking awareness *and* a distinctive concern with thoughts, feelings and emotions. Therefore, overall, contemporary spiritual teachers and speakers explained spiritual seeking similarly to how one might explain artistic interactions, i.e., in terms of aesthetic attributes such as depth, height and interiority rather than cognitive ones such as intelligence, perseverance, creativity or skill.

7.1.3.2 Answer to RQ5 (What are the informational features of contemporary spiritual seeking?)

My analysis suggests that spiritual seeking has various informational features, such as concerns and interactions. To elaborate, my interviewees revealed that spiritual seekers sought information due to specific affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns. In addition, participants explained that affective concerns often served as a bedrock for subsequent developmental and metaphysical concerns. Moreover, these concerns typically involved information-seeking from personal or documentary sources. However, in many cases, spiritual seeking also appeared to involve prayer, yoga and meditation-related practices. The affective concerns described by teachers and speakers, such as acute unhappiness and long-term dissatisfaction, may be understood as similar to the retreat residents' motivations discussed in my answer to RQ2 (see Section 7.1.2). Subsequent developmental concerns were typically personal growth-related, but teachers and speakers defined them as spiritual rather than material. Simply put, my participants stressed that developmental progress for spiritual seekers was typically measured not through material gain but by an increase in moral character, virtue and ethics often relayed by having a diminished sense of worldly desires and, consequently, a sense of being a better person. The metaphysical concerns were related to existential questions such as being and creation. Here, teachers and speakers explained that spiritual seekers sought answers to metaphysical questions as many believed that doing so might result in ultimate connections, such as finding God or salvation, which might help solve *all* their problems. Chabot's (2019) study also identified affect and personal development-related concerns and indirectly connected them to information needs (p. 108-110). This seems plausible as Chabot also proposed viewing meditation as a form of information practice; consequently, viewing spirituality-related affective and developmental concerns as information needs may, for him, be appropriate. However, in my case, the insights of spiritual teachers and speakers, when triangulated with my analysis of the retreat residents' interactions (see Section 7.1.2), suggests that meditation and contemplation may also be viewed as a kind of information 'non-practice'. Therefore, viewing

spiritual seekers' affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns as information needs might be restricting in such cases. Moreover, Chabot (2019) also noted that some of his participants were seeking an affective experience rather than tangible information, but he believed that in doing so, his participants were ultimately led to spiritual information through reading or listening (p. 109; also Chabot, 2014). In contrast, although information may be involved in spiritual seeking, I want to view spiritual-seeking concerns, in general, as affective-outcome-seeking concerns rather than information needs in this thesis, as I feel spiritual-seeking information practices may also have 'non-practice' elements which may not directly or indirectly translate into needs for information.

Regarding information interactions, my interviews with teachers and speakers indicated that spiritual seeking typically involved a blend of information and contemplative practices. To explain, teachers and speakers felt that spiritual seekers used conventional information practices, such as reading and listening and used books, videos, teachers, and other seekers as information sources. However, they pointed out that seekers also prayed, meditated, did yoga, and engaged in other contemplative practices. This way, notwithstanding Section 7.1.2's indication that silent contemplation might be a kind of non-practice, such practices might also be considered informative. Moreover, they may also have embodiment aspects, such as in yoga-related breathing techniques or movements. Thus, considering both possibilities, contemplative practices such as yoga and meditation might be viewed as having practice *and* non-practice elements. Therefore, my analysis suggests that contemporary spiritual seeking involves affective, developmental and metaphysical concerns, of which the affective concerns are primary and developmental and metaphysical are secondary concerns. Moreover, spiritual seeking has both conventional information practice and contemplative practice-related features.

7.1.4 Answers to Research Questions 6 and 7

Study Three was chronologically the first investigation I attempted; however, as previously reflected upon in Section 3.1, my initial attempt at analysing Study Three's data deviated from my overall interpretivistic intentions. I, therefore, returned to Study Three after conducting Studies One and Two. This way, I again analysed Study Three's data in light of the overall thesis aim and findings from the other two investigations before presenting it as Chapter 6: Spiritual Needs and Modern Librarianship. Accordingly, Study Three related to the following research questions:

- RQ6 What are practising librarians' views about spiritual needs?

- RQ7 What place (if any) do practising librarians feel spiritual needs have in modern library provision?

These questions formed part of the tripartite perspective approach (formulated in Section 3.1) and helped understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts by highlighting librarians' views as potential spiritual information providers. Here, I answer RQ6 as follows:

7.1.4.1 Answer to RQ6 (What are practising librarians' views about spiritual needs?)

Practising librarians viewed spiritual needs as related to broader social ideas such as diversity, community and culture. Moreover, several respondents linked spiritual need provisions with promoting inter-personal or inter-community tolerance, understanding, care and connection. Accordingly, most librarians felt the need for kindness and compassion and to be accepted as a person were most important to cater to and consider as professional librarians. These needs may be viewed as affective concerns; however, they did not directly surface in residents' narratives or teachers' and speakers' explanations. Therefore, although Galek et al.'s (2005) Spiritual Needs Questionnaire framework allowed for a more comprehensive spiritual need categorisation, some categories were surplus and did not neatly map onto or relate with findings from the other two investigations. In contrast, the need for meaning and purpose, to review one's life and understand significant and death-related events, did appear in several retreat residents' narratives and teachers' and speakers' explanations. However, most librarians considered these needs relatively unimportant in their responses. Therefore although meaning, purpose, divine, death and resolution-related needs may more accurately capture contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts, librarians do not consider these a top priority as part of their work roles or obligations.

7.1.4.2 Answer to RQ7 (What place (if any) do practising librarians feel spiritual needs have in modern library provision?)

My respondents felt that some spiritual needs had a place in libraries and others did not. To elaborate, most librarians felt that spiritual needs that were overtly religious such as those related to spiritual and religious ritual participation, did not have a place in modern library provision. In contrast, most respondents felt that spiritual needs associated with belongingness and connection were better considered in modern libraries, but many felt these needs were part of general

librarian-patron service relationships and were not explicitly spiritual. Regarding more practical needs, such as those relating to reading spiritual and religious materials, respondents' closed-ended responses placed such needs as perhaps important but not top-priority concerns. Moreover, for prayer-related needs, many respondents were ambivalent about such provisions, and those that shared text-based opinions on this topic generally felt provisions for prayer were contextually dependent. Therefore, respondents signalled that secularised versions of spiritual needs were perhaps better placed in libraries rather than religiously affiliated ones; however, even here, many felt that these needs should be dealt with through library space and resource provision rather than librarians' personal involvement or supervision. Accordingly, spiritual needs might be better placed in an integrated contemplative, spiritual and informational institution such as Gorichanaz's (2021) Sanctuary vision. I now integrate the insights from research questions 1 to 7 in the following section.

7.2 Integrated Insights and Interpretations

Having triangulated the insights created by my research questions in the previous section, I can now integrate and further interpret and discuss them in light of broader theories and models introduced in Chapter 1: Introduction to Information Behaviour. I start by highlighting the relationships between spiritual information and Sense-Making in the following subsection.

7.2.1 Spiritual Information and Unconventional Sense-Making

The findings from my investigations suggest that spiritual information interactions, specifically the retreat-related and spiritual-seeking ones examined in this thesis, typically involve affect-related concerns and motivations. However, my findings additionally indicate that in dealing with these concerns, seekers also engage in practices like silent contemplation to attempt to refrain from habitual thinking or sensemaking. Therefore, it appears that some of the retreat residents' interactions (and possibly spiritual seekers' more generally) might be better conceived of as a type of *unconventional* Sense-Making (Dervin et al., 2003). To explain, Dervin's 'situation-gap-use' Sense-Making approach (discussed in Section 1.1.1) incorporates affective concerns within its 'gaps', as muddles, angst and confusion; moreover, it implicitly includes affective outcomes as helps, hindrances, functions, consequences and future horizons. However, in dealing with these gaps and attaining better outcomes, Dervin explains that individuals build bridges by making sense through ideas, thoughts, memories, stories, feelings and cognitions (Dervin et al., 2003). Here, Dervin does not fully explain the nature of such bridge-building activities (Kari, 2001, p. 203); notwithstanding

this, Sense-Making activities and interactions are traditionally viewed as cognitive rather than contemplative (Gorichanaz and Latham, 2019). Chabot (2014) refers to such gap-bridging interactions as attempts to engage with reality hermeneutically (p. #). Therefore, the residents' contemplative silence and Satsang-related activities may not straightforwardly relate to Sense-Making as hermeneutic interpretation can be considered qualitatively synonymous with thinking, which the 'non-practice' elements of silent contemplation are specifically attempting to avoid. However, since the residents (and spiritual seekers) appear to be dealing with some kind of problem or gap and appear to be using contemplative practices for particular affective and contemplative outcomes, they appear to be nonetheless engaging in making sense and finding meaning but through unconventional behaviours and practices. Accordingly, the following subsection attempts to model the nature of such interactions by conceptualising the relationships between contemplative spiritual practices and information.

7.2.2 Relationships Between Contemplative Practices and Information

As stated in Section 0.1, both Pyati (2019) and Latham et al. (2020) utilised Duerr's (2004) Tree of Contemplative Practices to clarify and build connections between contemplative spiritual practices and information. Likewise, I explain the tree and its branches in this subsection and then connect them to the cube of profundity conceptualisation (offered in Section 5.6 earlier) to explain possible relationships between contemplative practices and information. Following this, I include the information practice and non-practice elements discussed earlier in this chapter to characterise further the features of various contemplative practices and their relationships with information. I start by explaining the tree and its various branches in the following subsection.

7.2.2.1 The Tree of Contemplative Practices

The Tree of Contemplative Practices (shown in Fig. H, centre) illustrates various contemplative practices that have spirituality-related origins but nowadays are also used in secular contexts and outside formalised religion (Duerr, 2004). Here, Duerr (2004, p. 40) explains that each tree branch represents a type of contemplative practice carried out for particular intentions as follows:

- Active Practices: Work, service, and activism *as* practice.
- Creation Process Practices: An artistic manifestation of contemplation in which the process is emphasised more than the product.

- **Generative Practices**: Practices to generate devotion to God, Spirit, the Divine or evoke compassion, lovingkindness, etc.
- **Movement Practices**: Practices that emphasise movement as a path to awareness and connection.
- **Relational Practices**: Practices that involve communicating either with others or oneself in a reflective process.
- **Ritual/Cyclical Practices**: Practices done alone or together with others to mark passages of time or milestones in a person's life, to acknowledge and/or catalyse change.
- **Stillness Practices:** Practices that cultivate stillness to quiet the mind, increase awareness, and/or create space for God/wisdom to come forward.

Accordingly, active practices can include, for example, pilgrimages and vigils; movement practices can include yoga and labyrinth walking, and stillness practices can include silence, centering and meditation (Latham et al., 2020; Duerr, 2004). Latham et al. (2020) suggest that many of these practices can have informational features (see Section 2.5 for details); however, they also believe that disentangling the relationships between contemplative practices and information requires further research (p. 1011). Based on the findings from my investigations, I can now offer a conceptualisation of these relationships utilising the depth, height and interiority aspects developed in Section 5.6 to characterise the activities in various tree branches. In addition, I use the information practice and non-practice ideas to explain functional relationships between contemplative practices and information practices. The following subsection relates the tree with Section 5.6's explication of profound information interactions' depth, height and interiority aspects.

7.2.2.2 The Tree of Contemplative Practices' Depth, Height and Interiority Aspects

Section 5.6 offered a theoretical explication of profound information interactions based on spiritual teachers' and speakers' explanations of contemporary spiritual seeking. This explication attempted to generalise spiritual seeking's depth, height and interiority to similar interactions such as journalling or pilgrimage (and others included in The Tree of Contemplative Practices explained in 7.2.2.1). To do so, Section 5.6 explained that such profound interactions might be considered in a three-dimensional cube space wherein interactions with one aspect, such as depth, may sit on the cube's edges or vertices, interactions with two aspects, such as depth and interiority, may be placed on the relevant surfaces, and interactions with all three aspects may be placed inside the cube

occupying it expansively. Accordingly, to explain relationships between contemplative practices and information, each activity in Duerr's (2004) tree may first be viewed as having various depth, height and interiority-related aesthetic characteristics[25]. Following this, each activity may be viewed as having information practice and non-practice functional elements. The following subsection discusses these elements in more detail.

7.2.2.3 The Tree of Contemplative Practices' Information Practice and Non-Practice Elements

In addition to aesthetic characteristics, my investigations can also offer relationships between contemplative aspects and information at a functional level. To explain, recall that the retreat residents' silent contemplation and Satasang-related activities, explained in Section 4.5.3.1 earlier, appeared to have 'non-practice' elements. In addition, Section 7.1.3.2 explained that in spite of this, contemplative activities might still be informative and thus have practice *and* non-practice elements. Here, I define information non-practice as refraining from habitual cognitive sensemaking to carry out or participate in an activity with the intention of gaining non-conceptual wisdom or insight. For example, by paying attention to one's breath or movements (in yoga or meditation), sounds (in chanting), images (in visualisation) or corporeal sensations (in dance) to deliberately refrain from *thinking* and instead attempt to allow insight to *occur* contemplatively. Accordingly, a contemplative practice or interaction may be viewed as composed of varying degrees of information practice and non-practice. For instance, silence, centering and quieting the mind (relating to the stillness tree branch in Figure H) may have more non-practice rather than practice-related elements. Relatively, journalling and storytelling may have more practice rather than non-practice elements[26]. Information and library science research typically seeks to understand better ways of conceptualising, for example, novel ways of identifying, indexing, cataloguing, recording and storing. Consequently, putting forward a 'non-practice', i.e., an attempt to refrain from thinking and conceptualising, as a possible information behaviour worth examining, may at first seem out of place. However, many information and library scientists also seek to understand how people interact with information, deal with problems and make sense of their lives

[25] Identifying the precise nature of each activity's aspects would require further research; however, this may be possible using ethnographic and observational methods. I shall discuss this in Chapter 8: Thesis Conclusion, Contributions and Future Outlook.

[26] Like aesthetic characteristics, identifying each activity's functional elements would require further research; however, this, too, may be possible using ethnographic and observational methods. I shall discuss this in Chapter 8: Thesis Conclusion, Contributions and Future Outlook.

outside of conventionally understood contexts (see Chapter One: Introduction to Information Behaviour); therefore, examining the possibility of attempts to refrain from thinking and conceptualising in information behaviour can be both insightful and compelling. This way, integrating these ideas into one model, I propose that each tree activity may be conceptualised as composed of information practice and non-practice functional elements and, in addition, possess depth, height and interiority-related aesthetic characteristics (see Fig. H for pictorial representation).

Figure H: Relationships Between Contemplative Practices and Information (Tree image from Latham et al., 2020)

This model, however, is bounded to The Tree of Contemplative Practice's profound information interactions and may not generalise or transfer to interactions outside this context. The following section reflects upon this in more detail.

7.3 Boundaries

In addition to the methodological and study-related limitations discussed in Parts One and Two earlier, the integrated insights discussed in this chapter are bounded by this thesis' contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated context. To explain, I conducted my investigations to understand the role of information in spirituality and unaffiliated religion. Accordingly, my findings and insights may be placed within Kari and Hartel's (2007) pleasurable and profound framework (discussed in Section 2.7.2). However, within this framework, my findings more straightforwardly

apply to profound interactions and are further bounded to spirituality, religion and contemplation-related practices and behaviours. As discussed in Section 7.2.2, my integrated insights may help offer relationships between contemplative spiritual practices and information, but these hold meaning and relevance within Duerr's (2004) Tree of Contemplative Practices categorisation. Therefore succinctly stated, although my investigations' findings and insights might help connect information and library science understandings with contemplative studies and vice-versa, they may not hold ground in work-related and problem-solving information contexts, for example, cataloguing and indexing. Nonetheless, my investigations help open further research avenues that may interest information and library research scholars working in pleasurable and profound areas. I outline some of these avenues in the following section.

7.4 Further Exploration Channels

Besides answering RQ1 to RQ7, my findings suggest pronounced relationships between affect and information that could be explored further in information and library science research. Here, the affective turn introduced in Section 1.1.2 may at first seem to offer precedents, as affect was first highlighted as far back as the 1980s in information behaviour (see Section 1.1 for a historical overview). However, prevailing theories and models that deal with affect are more conducive to explaining cognitive and epistemic outcomes rather than affective ones.

In my investigations, several residents in Study One sought spiritual knowledge to overcome a negative feeling of meaninglessness that manifested as a sense of something missing for them. Moreover, as their worldviews changed from materialistic to more spiritual, some residents used spiritual information sources to seek personal fulfilment. Finally, others sought and used spiritual information to regain meaning after distressing events and recreate the dramatic meaningfulness they experienced during mystical glimpses. Likewise, several outcomes of the residents' retreat interactions, discussed in Section 4.6.5, were also affective. Moreover, teachers' and speakers' explanations in Study Two also indicated that spiritual seekers sought information and guidance predominantly to deal with affective concerns. However, most information behaviour conceptualisations are geared towards cognitive and epistemic outcomes rather than affective and contemplative ones (Gorichanaz and Latham, 2019). Moreover, as noted in Section 1.4, information outcomes are rarely investigated or discussed in information behaviour research (Case and O'Connor, 2016).

In prevailing affective models, such as in Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (discussed in 1.1.2), affect is incorporated as part of individuals' information interactions by considering, for example, people's apprehensions, uncertainties, optimism, lowered confidence and heightened confidence as they perform individual search tasks. However, affective states and experiences in such models appear as secondary phenomena in predominantly cognitive sensemaking interactions, not affective-outcome-seeking ones. Similarly, Nahl's Affective Load Theory, which deals with affect but has not been explicitly introduced in earlier chapters, includes affect to describe states that disrupt ongoing cognitive processes whilst searching for online information and seeking epistemic outcomes (Nahl, 2004; Nahl and Bilal, 2007). Therefore, although affect has previously been incorporated within information behaviour theories and models, such models do not directly deal with affective-outcome-seeking practices and behaviours such as those highlighted in this thesis. Other scholars, too, have called for better affective information behaviour models in contexts such as amateur genealogy and pornographic information experience (e.g., Fulton, 2009; Keilty and Leazer, 2018). Therefore, the findings from this thesis help reinforce calls for information and library studies scholars to explore affect-seeking interactions more concertedly.

7.5 Chapter Conclusion and Link to Chapter 8

This chapter presented a general discussion of Part Two's interpretivistic investigations. In addition, it provided answers to this thesis' research questions, integrated the studies' insights and offered novel conceptualisations for understanding the relationships between contemporary spiritual information interactions and information. The following chapter concludes this thesis by discussing its original contributions and future outlook.

8 Thesis Conclusion, Contributions and Future Outlook

This thesis has helped understand the role of information in contemporary spiritual and religiously unaffiliated contexts using a tripartite perspective highlighting spiritual retreat residents' motivations and interactions, spiritual teachers' & speakers' insights and thoughts, and practising librarians' attitudes. As evidenced by Part Two and Three's descriptive and interpretivistic discussions, contemporary spiritual and religious interactions can be nuanced, meaningful *and* rich in information-related phenomena. This thesis has just scratched the surface of these information-rich contexts and interactions. The following section outlines this thesis' original contributions.

8.1 Thesis Contributions

This thesis' original contributions lie in its interpretivistic investigations, integrated insights and subsequent conceptualisations. Chapter 0: Thesis Introduction pointed out that more than eighty per cent of individuals worldwide belong to a religious group. In addition, it stressed that spiritual and religious interactions frequently occur outside formalised religious settings in contemporary Western culture. Yet, information and library science scholars have overlooked how people seek and use religious and spiritual information and whether and how such interactions might be supported in modern libraries and outside traditional religious institutions and structures. Part One's Review of The Literature on Spirituality and Religion in Information Research demonstrated this by highlighting gaps in our understanding of spiritual and religious information behaviour. Moreover, it indicated a lack of attention to interactions outside traditional and established religious settings and contexts.

Chapter 2 was possibly the first narrative review to consolidate religion and spirituality-related literature in Internet studies; information behaviour; and galleries, libraries, archives and museums, and highlighted several underexplored research contexts and areas, such as New Age, alternative and folk religions. Moreover, it stressed that information scholars had paid greater attention to professionals' spiritual and religious interactions, overlooking everyday spiritual and religious individuals' concerns. Accordingly, Part Two's investigations have helped increase our understanding of spiritual information practices and behaviours outside traditional religious

contexts, highlighting lay individuals' concerns and interactions in underexplored domains such as spiritual retreats and spiritual seeking outside formalised religious organisations. In addition, it has also helped understand librarians' perceptions about catering to patrons' spirituality and religion-related needs and expectations.

Study One: Spiritual Information and Meaning-Making was possibly the first study to investigate the role of information in a contemplative spiritual retreat-related context. The findings from this study indicated that Sense-Making in such contexts might differ from epistemic and work-centred ones. Accordingly, it offered a novel concept—information 'non-practice' to help conceptualise the functional aspects of such unconventional Sense-Making interactions. Similarly, Study Two: Contemporary Spiritual Seeking was also novel and contributed to understanding contemporary spiritual seeking concerns and patterns outside religiously affiliated contexts. In addition, it helped introduce Seekership or spiritual seeking to information and library science research as an intuitive contextual framework for analysing contemporary spiritual and religious information interactions. Lastly, Study Three was possibly the first to catalogue, analyse and present practising UK and US librarians' views regarding spirituality and religion and helped understand how practising librarians feel about providing resources and services for patrons' spiritual needs and concerns.

The integrated insights presented in Part Three helped combine the studies' outputs to develop a novel conceptualisation explaining possible relationships between contemplative practices and information. To do so, it deconstructed the depth, height and interiority aspects of information interactions identified in Study Two and linked them with Duerr's Tree of Contemplative Practices categorisation introduced in Chapter 0: Thesis Introduction. It then included Study One's information 'non-practice' elements to characterise each tree activity further. In doing so, this thesis also helped facilitate transdisciplinary dialogue between contemplative studies and library and information science research. Moreover, besides empirical contributions, this thesis has signalled that secondary qualitative data and analysis can be a helpful research approach during unexpected circumstances such as government-enforced physical distancing measures and worldwide pandemic-related lockdowns. Finally, this thesis has demonstrated that frameworks from other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and nursing, can help structure and enrich information behaviour investigations and potentially contribute to transdisciplinary discussions and collaboration. The following section discusses the future outlook for this thesis' research.

8.2 Future Outlook and Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

In considering this thesis' future outlook, I highlight that several of this thesis' interpretivistic insights should be investigated and strengthened through further context-centred examinations. For example, activities in other Tree of Contemplative Practices branches, such as divine reading, chanting or pilgrimage, could be analysed ethnographically to see if these practices also have 'non-practice' elements, like those in meditation and silent contemplation. In addition, the depth, height and interiority aspects of information could also be investigated further to understand if these might be present in other profound and possibly even pleasurable interactions. We might also consider if aspects of aesthetics help better represent information interactions more broadly across various information and library science contexts and settings. Many of these investigations, and the insights generated through this thesis, have potential implications for information and library science theory, research and practice.

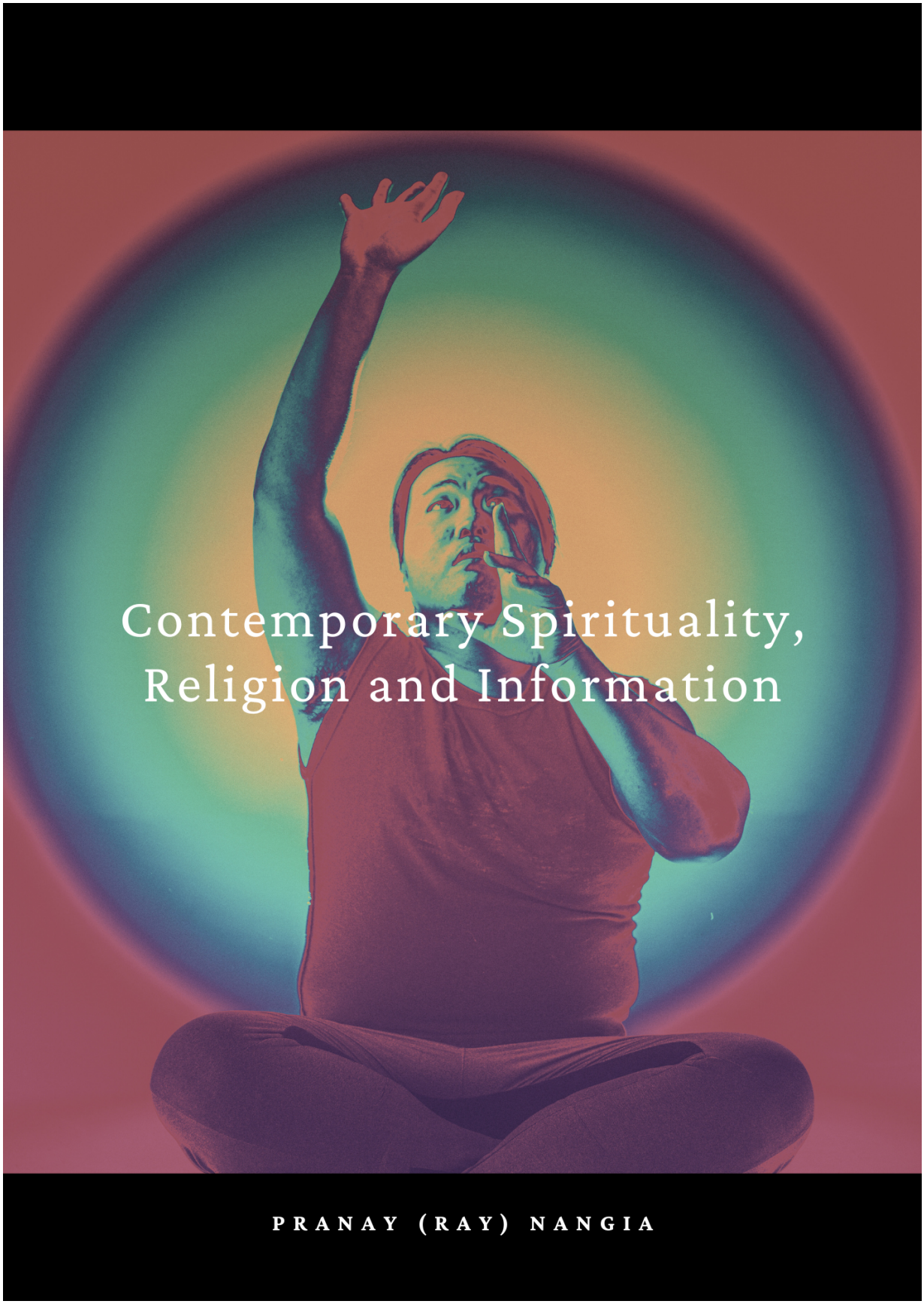
First, considering the idea of 'non-practices' as possible information behaviours (in contemporary spirituality and religion) may help provide a means of theorising traditionally overlooked information interactions like silence and contemplation and, additionally, help connect information and library science with other fields interested in analysing contemplative processes such as prayer, mindfulness and meditation.

Second, systematically conceptualising information interactions' aesthetic attributes, such as depth and interiority, may help introduce further nuance into our understanding of human information interaction by shifting focus from technical aspects, such as information transfer and knowledge acquisition, to how individuals more naturalistically experience, feel and make sense of information.

Finally, comparisons between spiritual and religious individuals' predominantly *affective* information-seeking motivations and librarians' *socio-cultural* conceptualisations of spiritual needs and interactions signal a possible opportunity for developing more in-depth guidance for professionals wishing to better understand information interactions in contemporary spirituality and religion and those seeking to provide spiritual and religious resources and services to library patrons.

This thesis has shed light upon fascinating aspects of information use, such as seeking personal meaning and transcendence. In addition, it has helped introduce Seekership theory to information

and library research and demonstrated an innovative and structured mechanism for understanding library professionals' views in intriguing contexts such as spirituality and religion. These contributions, too, offer promising avenues for further research and may help information and library scholars better conceptualise and formulate their investigations in similarly profound and personally meaningful contexts. The following pages include this thesis' cited references and supplementary research materials.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Supplementary Materials

- DETAILS OF PAPERS EXAMINED FOR CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN INFORMATION RESEARCH
- PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDY TWO
- PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDY THREE
- LIST OF QUESTIONS ASKED OF EACH RESIDENT IN THE VIDEOS ANALYSED IN STUDY ONE
- QUALTRICS QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPED FOR STUDY THREE

DETAILS OF PAPERS EXAMINED FOR CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN INFORMATION RESEARCH

Year	Paper title	Authors	publication type
2007	A review of the spiritual in information studies	Kari, Jarkko;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Information needs and information behaviour of patients and their family members in a cancer palliative care setting: an exploratory study of an existential context from different perspectives	Fourie, Ina;	Peer reviewed article
2000	Religion on the Internet: Research prospects and promises	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2000	The promised land or electronic chaos? Toward understanding religion on the Internet	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2000	Religious movements and the internet: the new frontier of cult controversies	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
1998	The Internet as a resource for facilitating religious ministry	Decker, Blake R;	Thesis
2000	Religion on the Internet: Research prospects and promises	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2000	The promised land or electronic chaos? Toward understanding religion on the Internet	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2000	Religious movements and the internet: the new frontier of cult controversies	Hadden, Jeffrey K; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2000	The use of the Internet by Japanese new religious movements	Tweddell, Ian;	Thesis
2001	Seeking God in Cyberspace: Religion and the Internet	Carrigan Jr, Henry L;	Peer reviewed article
2002	Intersecting identities: Young people, religion, and interaction on the Internet.	Lovheim, ME;	Thesis
2002	A study of the interrelationships between the Internet and religious organizations: An application of diffusion theory	Rupp, William T; Smith, Alan D;	Peer reviewed article

2002	The Internet as an Interface for Japanese Religious Life	Jekel, Marjon;	Peer reviewed article
2003	Religion on the Internet: Community and virtual existence	Foltz, Franz; Foltz, Frederick;	Peer reviewed article
2003	Internet, religion and the attribution of social trust	Linderman, Alf; Lövheim, Mia;	Book chapter
2003	Religion on the Internet: A sociological inquiry into participation and community online.	Helland, Christopher;	Thesis
2003	Virtually real: problems of authenticity in religion on the internet	Alberts, Thomas;	Thesis
2001	Religious Studies on the Internet	Bostrom, William J;	Peer reviewed article
2004	Religion online: Finding faith on the Internet	Dawson, Lorne L; Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2013	Cyberfaith: How Americans pursue religion online	Larsen, Elena;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Popular religion and the World Wide Web: A match made in (cyber) heaven	Helland, Christopher;	Book chapter
2013	Cyberspace as sacred space: Communicating religion on computer networks	O'LEARY, STEPHEN D;	Book chapter
2013	Religion and the quest for virtual community	Dawson, LL	Book chapter
2013	Reading and praying online: The continuity of religion online and online religion in Internet Christianity	Young, Glenn;	Book chapter
2013	" This Is My Church": Seeing the Internet and Club Culture as Spiritual Spaces	Campbell, Heidi;	Book chapter
2013	" Rip. Burn. Pray.": Islamic Expression Online	Bunt, Gary R	Book chapter
1999	New religions and the Internet: Recruiting in a new public space	Dawson, LL; Hennebry, J	Book chapter
2013	The Internet as Virtual Spiritual Community: Teen Witches in the United States and Australia	BERGER, H,A; EZZY, D	Book chapter
2013	Virtual Pilgrimage to Ireland's Croagh Patrick	MACWILLIAMS, M	Book chapter

2004	Kemetic Orthodoxy: Ancient Egyptian Religion on the Internet—A Research Note	Krogh, Marilyn C; Pillifant, Brooke Ashley;	Peer reviewed article
2004	The Internet as distributor and mirror of religious and ritual knowledge	Krueger, Oliver;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Spiritualising the Internet. Uncovering discourses and narratives of religious Internet usage	Campbell, Heidi;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Making space for religion in Internet studies	Campbell, Heidi;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Constructing religious identity on the Internet	Lövheim, Mia; Linderman, Alf G;	Book chapter
2005	Online religion as lived religion. Methodological issues in the study of religious participation on the internet	Helland, Christopher;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Discovering the invisible Internet: Methodological aspects of searching religion on the Internet	Krüger, Oliver;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Methods and theory for studying religion on the internet: Introduction to the special issue on theory and methodology	Krüger, Oliver;	Peer reviewed article
2005	The death of a virtual Muslim discussion group: Issues and methods in analysing religion on the internet	Larsson, Göran;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Using the Internet for religion: a study of the possible use of the Internet for religious purposes among the Catholics of the Archdiocese of Mumbai, India	Botelho, Jude;	Thesis
2005	The Internet and Religion in Singapore: A National Survey	Kluver, Randolph; Detenber, Benjamin H; Waipeng, Lee; Hameed, Shahiraa Sahul; Cheong, Pauline Hope;	paper (don't know)
2005	Cultured technology: The Internet and religious fundamentalism	Barzilai-Nahon, Karine; Barzilai, Gad;	Peer reviewed article

2006	Religion and the Internet	Hackett, Rosalind IJ;	Peer reviewed article
2007	Give me that online-time religion: The role of the internet in spiritual life	McKenna, Katelyn YA; West, Kelly J;	Peer reviewed article
2007	'"Get on the internet!" says the Lord': Religion, cyberspace and Christianity in contemporary Africa	Asamoah-Gyadu, J Kwabena;	Peer reviewed article
2007	Technological modernization, the Internet, and religion in Singapore	Kluver, Randolph; Cheong, Pauline Hope;	Peer reviewed article
2007	Religion on the Internet	Cowan, Douglas E;	Book chapter
2007	Who's got the power? Religious authority and the Internet	Campbell, Heidi;	Peer reviewed article
2007	Internet use among religious followers: Religious postmodernism in Japanese Buddhism	Fukamizu, Rev Kenshin;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Muslim surfers on the internet: Using the theory of planned behaviour to examine the factors influencing engagement in online religious activities	Ho, Shirley S; Lee, Waipeng; Hameed, Shahiraa Sahul;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Unsuccessful 'chats' for mutual understanding about religion in the Japanese Internet: preliminary studies for global information ethics	Tamura, Takanori; Tamura, Daiyu;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Religion and the Internet	Dawson, Lorne L;	Book chapter
2008	Rethinking cyberreligion?: Teens, religion and the Internet in Sweden	Lövheim, Mia;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Internet popular culture and Jewish values: The influence of technology on religion in Israeli schools	Sherlick, Lawrence H; Hong, Junhao;	Book chapter
2009	The Internet highway and religious communities: Mapping and contesting spaces in religion-online	Cheong, Pauline Hope; Poon, Jessie PH; Huang, Shirlena; Casas, Irene;	Peer reviewed article

2009	Religious ecology on the Internet: A case study of Tibetan Buddhism	Wei, Low Yuen;	Book chapter
2010	Believe in the net: Implicit religion and the internet hype, 1994-2001	Pärna, Karen;	Thesis
2011	Internet and religion	Campbell, Heidi;	Book chapter
2011	Gender, religion and new media: Attitudes and behaviors related to the internet among Ultra-Orthodox women employed in computerized environments	Shahar, Rivka Neriya-Ben; Lev-On, Azi;	Peer reviewed article
2011	The internet, cyber-religion, and authority: the case of the Indonesian Liberal Islam Network	Ali, Muhamad;	Book chapter
2011	Creating digital enclaves: Negotiation of the internet among bounded religious communities	Campbell, Heidi A; Golan, Oren;	Peer reviewed article
2012	Online religion in Nigeria: The internet church and cyber miracles	Chiluwa, Innocent;	Peer reviewed article
2012	The internet mediatization of religion and church	Fischer-Nielsen, Peter;	Book chapter
2012	Latino Muslim by Design-A Study of Race, Religion and the Internet in American Minority Discourse	Morales, Harold Daniel;	Thesis
2012	Seeking the sacred online: Internet and the individualization of religious life in Quebec	Meintel, Deirdre;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Religion and the Internet: A microcosm for studying Internet trends and implications	Campbell, Heidi A;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Reading religion in internet memes	Bellar, Wendi; Campbell, Heidi A; Cho, Kyong James; Terry, Andrea; Tsuria, Ruth; Yadlin-Segal, Aya; Ziemer, Jordan;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Mizuko kuyō online: Religious ritual and Internet space in contemporary Japan	DePaulo, Julie Allison;	Thesis
2014	Religion and the Internet in the Israeli Orthodox context	Campbell, Heidi;	Book chapter
2014	Religion and the Internet: Understanding digital religion, social media and culture	Cheong, PH;	Book chapter

2014	Sikh-ing online: the role of the Internet in the religious lives of young British Sikhs	Singh, Jasjit;	Peer reviewed article
2014	Religious communication and internet usage: How do Muslims fare on the web?	Agboola, Abdulhameed Kayode;	Peer reviewed article
2015	Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion: Volume 6: Religion and Internet (2015)	Enstedt, Daniel; Larsson, Göran; Pace, Enzo;	Book chapter
2015	Constructing religion in the digital age: The internet and modern Mormon identities	Avance, Rosemary;	Thesis
2015	Internet Religion: Community Formation on Wiccan Web Sites	Wright, Pearl;	paper (don't know)
2015	FORMS OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY ON THE INTERNET	JUREK, KRZYSZTOF;	Book chapter
2016	When Religion Meets the Internet	Iqbal, Asep Muhamad;	paper (don't know)
2016	“Because Faith is a Personal Matter!” Aspects of Public and Private in Religious Internet Use	Neumaier, Anna;	Peer reviewed article
2017	Communicating mixed messages about religion through internet memes	Aguilar, Gabrielle K; Campbell, Heidi A; Stanley, Mariah; Taylor, Ellen;	Peer reviewed article
2017	Computer-mediated religion: Religion on the Internet at the turn of the twenty-first century	Beckerlegge, Gwilym;	Book chapter
2017	Tinkering with technology and religion in the digital age: The effects of Internet use on religious belief, behavior, and belonging	McClure, Paul K;	Peer reviewed article
2018	Surveying digital religion in China: Characteristics of religion on the Internet in Mainland China	Xu, Shengju; Campbell, Heidi A;	Peer reviewed article
2018	Memorialization and immortality: Religion, community and the internet	Gibson, Margaret;	Book chapter
2018	The Formation of Online Religious Identities: A Case Study of the Internet-Hindu in India's Cyberspace	Chetty, Denzil;	Peer reviewed article

2019	Canada's (Post)" New Age" Spiritual Centers and the Impact of the Internet in the Context of Digital Religion	Shainidze, Roland;	Thesis
2020	Religion and Meaning in the Digital Age: Field Research on Internet/Web Religion 1	Hoover, Stewart M; Park, Jin Kyu;	Book chapter
1992	Religious studies and electronic information: a librarian's perspective	Stover, Mark;	Peer reviewed article
1997	EXPLORING THE RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS IN RELATION TO MODERN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES: A STUDY OF MALAKWAL CITY	Haris Farooq, Dr; Chaudhry, Abid Ghafoor;	paper (don't know)
2000	Management of information in the religious domain through an IVR system	Jamaludin, Zulikha; Kelana, Musafir; Embong, Abdullah; Mahmod, A Rhaffor;	Peer reviewed article
2001	Lateral relationships in multicultural, multilingual databases in the spiritual and religious domains: The OM Information Service	Neelameghan, Arashanipalai;	Peer reviewed article
2002	Information and communications technology and religious education: Extending the classroom community of discourse	McGrady, Andrew;	paper (don't know)
2004	Information seeking behaviour of the Catholic religious in Ibadan, Nigeria	Adetimiriin, AE;	paper (don't know)
2004	Religion, culture and society in the ‘information age’	Mellor, Philip A;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Online Buddhist community: An alternative religious organization in the information age	Kim, Mun-Cho;	Book chapter
2005	Serving the religious information needs of our communities without blowing the budget	Archer, Douglas;	Peer reviewed article
2005	Information Technology Management at a Religious Organization	Huang, Albert;	paper (don't know)
2006	Religious information poverty in Australian state schools	Loria, Pat;	Peer reviewed article

2008	Serving the religious information needs of our communities without blowing the budget: Part 2, Scriptures	Archer, J Douglas;	paper (don't know)
2008	Toward a religious ethics of information communication technology	Shields, Richard;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Secrecy and new religious movements: Concealment, surveillance, and privacy in a new age of information	Urban, Hugh B;	Peer reviewed article
2008	"IN-LINE RELIGION": INNOVATIVE PASTORAL APPLICATIONS OF THE NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (NICTS) BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NIGERIA	Ihejirika, Walter C;	Peer reviewed article
2008	Information practices of Canadian Muslims post 9/11	Caidi, Nadia; MacDonald, Susan;	Peer reviewed article
2009	Religious Studies Collections and Information Literacy: A Snapshot of a University Library	Atwood, Thomas A; Crosetto, Alice;	Peer reviewed article
2009	Pursuing wisdom: An investigation of the relationship between some ancient religious concepts of wisdom and current notions of critical thinking within information literacy	Nyrose, Eric;	Peer reviewed article
2010	Online primary sources in religious studies: Active learning exercises for information literacy instruction	Studstill, Randall; Cabrera, Peggy;	Peer reviewed article
2010	Mystery and transparency: access to information in the domains of religion and science	STURGES, Paul;	Peer reviewed article
2011	Religious information literacy: Using information to learn in church community	Gunton, Lyndelle;	Peer reviewed article
2011	Beyond belief: Prayer as communication in religious information seeking	Michels, David H;	paper (don't know)
2011	Study of the information seeking behavior of theology and religious studies students	Lipton, Saundra; Nyrose, Eric;	paper (don't know)

2011	New Horizons: a center for research into information and religion	Wicks, Don A;	paper (don't know)
2011	Methodology for studying the information seeking of Catholic clergy. Advances in the Study of Information and Religion, 1 (5), 92-108	Curran, CC; Burns, K;	Peer reviewed article
2012	Information Seeking, Sharing and Use on Religion among Afghan youth in Toronto	Quirke, Lisa;	paper (don't know)
2013	Technology and religion: Information seeking behaviour of online religious information among Malays	Hasan, Haslin; Haron, Hamdzun;	Peer reviewed article
2013	he Search for Meaning: Information Seeking and Religious Conversion	Guzik, Elysia;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Investigating religious information searching through analysis of a search engine log	Wan-Chik, Rita; Clough, Paul; Sanderson, Mark;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Barriers and motivations affecting information systems usage by Hajj-Umrah religious tourism operators in Saudi Arabia	Brdesee, Hani; Corbitt, Brian; Pittayachawan, Siddhi;	Peer reviewed article
2013	A case study of religious engagement online: How Malaysian Muslim students access Islamic information	Mahadi, Mohd Adam;	Thesis
2013	Training for religious information literacy and community dialogue: The experience of WOREM Theological Institute Library, Southeast Nigeria	Phillip, KJ;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Negotiating health-related uncertainties: Biomedical and religious sources of information and support	Cadge, Wendy; Bergey, Meredith;	Peer reviewed article
2013	Information culture and belief formation in religious congregations	Freeburg, Darin;	Thesis
2014	Social, religious information behavior: An analysis of Yahoo! Answers queries about belief	Cunningham, Sally Jo; Hinze, Annika;	Peer reviewed article
2015	Information use environment of religious professionals: A case study of the everyday life information seeking behavior of Catholic clergy in Northern Nigeria	Dankasa, Jacob;	Thesis

2015	Goals and information behavior in religious sermons	Freeburg, Darin; Roland, Daniel;	Peer reviewed article
2015	Role Of Information Communication Technology In Provoking Religious Extremism	Rehman, Bushra; Sultan, Ammara; Zeeshan, Mashwish;	paper (don't know)
2015	Online Religion? The Evolving Religious Information Landscapes of Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism	Gorichanaz, Tim;	Peer reviewed article
2016	A Proposal: The Religious Information Practices of New Kadampa Buddhists: Examining the Informational Nature of Buddhist Practice and a Prolegomenon to a Buddhist Theory of Information Practice	Chabot, Roger;	paper (don't know)
2016	The Information-Seeking Behavior of Catholic Women Discerning a Vocation to Religious Life	Hickey, Katherine;	Thesis
2016	An Information Technology Surrogate for Religion: The Veneration of Deceased Family in Online Games	Bainbridge, W;	Book chapter
2017	Experiences of immanence and transcendence in the religious information practices of New Kadampa Buddhists	Chabot, Roger;	Peer reviewed article
2017	Analysing information needs and information seeking behaviour of members of Catholic Religious Institutes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya	Kimani, Hannah Njeri; Chege, Andrew;	Peer reviewed article
2017	The effects of cultural, geographical and religious factors on information seeking: A contextual study	Dankasa, Jacob;	Peer reviewed article
2017	The information behavior of catholic women discerning a vocation to religious life	Hickey, Katherine A;	Peer reviewed article
2017	Sharing political and religious information on Facebook: Coworker reactions	Kaloydis, Felicia O; Richard, Erin M; Maas, Erin M;	Peer reviewed article
2018	The openness of religious beliefs to the influence of external information	Freeburg, Darin;	Peer reviewed article

2018	Information and Communication Technology Uptake and Use in Religious Institutions in Kenya	Mungai, Simon K;	Thesis
2018	Religion and fake news: Faith-based alternative information ecosystems in the US and Europe	Douglas, Christopher;	Peer reviewed article
2019	The Information Behavior of Religious Clergy in North America	Peyton, Alicea;	Peer reviewed article
2019	Designing for Religious Information Needs in Egypt and Saudi Arabia	Zamora, Jennifer;	paper (don't know)
2020	Impact of cultural and religious literacy: Implications for information literacy	Khader, Malak; Allen, Jeff; Njeri, Millicent; Zimmerman, Tara; Rosellini, Amy; Eaves, Tresia;	paper (don't know)
2022	Chatting at church: Information diffusion through religious networks	Murphy, David MA; Nourani, Vesall; Lee, David R;	Peer reviewed article
1983	RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AS VIEWED BY THE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST.	Warner, Wayne Gilbert;	Thesis
2014	Zotero in faith community: encouraging religious literacy through the use of an online library	Eliceiri, Rebecca Klemme;	Peer reviewed article
2022	School Libraries' Roles in Promoting Religious and Ethnic Diversity among Nigerian Children for Evolving Global Information Landscape	Onyebuchi, Grace Uchechi;	Peer reviewed article
2021	The internet usage of religious organizations in Mainland China: Case analysis of the Buddhist Association of China	Xu, Shengju; Campbell, Heidi A;	Peer reviewed article
2022	Religion and the internet: Digital religion,(hyper) mediated spaces, and materiality	Evolvi, Giulia;	Peer reviewed article
1999	The information-seeking behavior of pastoral clergy: A study of the interaction of their work worlds and work roles	Wicks, Donald A	Peer reviewed article

2010	The Information-Seeking Habits of Baptist Ministers	Lambert, Joshua D	Peer reviewed article
2010	Searching for salvation: An analysis of US religious searching on the World Wide Web	Jansen, Bernard J; Andrea, Tapia; Amanda, Spink	Peer reviewed article
2006	Technology in spiritual formation: an exploratory study of computer mediated religious communications	Wyche, Susan P., et al.	Peer reviewed article
2011	A Survey of Information Resources Required by Ulama to Perform Their Work Roles: A Case Study of Borno State, Nigeria	Bakar, Ahmed Bakeri Abu, and Adam Gambo Saleh	Peer reviewed article
2013	Information needs and seeking behavior of Muslim clerics in relation to preaching in Nigeria	Saleh, Adam Gambo, and Hauwa Sadi	Peer reviewed article
2017	Yoga at the public library: an exploratory survey of Canadian and American librarians	Lenstra, N.	Peer reviewed article
2012	Museum space and the experience of the sacred	Buggeln, G. T.	Peer reviewed article
2012	Introduction museums and material religion	Paine, C.	Peer reviewed article
2017	Religion in museums: global and multidisciplinary perspectives	Buggeln, G., Paine, C., & Plate, S. B.	Book chapter
1995	The art museum as ritual	Duncan, C.	Peer reviewed article
2005	The art museum as ritual	Duncan, C.	Book chapter
2004	Battlefield pilgrims at Gettysburg National Military Park	John B Gatewood, Catherine M Cameron	Peer reviewed article

2020	Information and contemplation: a call for reflection and action	Latham, K. F., Hartel, J., & Gorichanaz, T.	Peer reviewed article
2019	Contemplative aims for information	Gorichanaz, T., & Latham, K. F.	Peer reviewed article
2021	The library as a campus spiritual space: Evidence from student focus groups	Mross, E., & Riehman-Murphy, C.	Peer reviewed article
2018	A place to study, a place to pray: Supporting student spiritual needs in academic libraries	Mross, E., & Riehman-Murphy, C.	Peer reviewed article
2019	Where the private meets the public: Results of a survey of library professionals' observed student use of academic library spaces for prayer	Christina Riehman-Murphy, Emily Mross	Peer reviewed article
2021	Contemplating Infrastructure: An Ethnographic Study of the University of Toronto Faculty of Information Inforum's iRelax Mindfulness Resource Area	Samson, H.	Thesis
2020	Sanctuary: An institutional vision for the digital age	Gorichanaz, T.	Peer reviewed article
2013	Numinous experiences with museum objects	Latham, K. F.	Peer reviewed article
2003	Seeking numinous experiences in the unremembered past	Catherine M Cameron, John B Gatewood	Peer reviewed article
2013	Is there Space for Spirituality in the Contemporary Museum?	Simpson, M. G.	Peer reviewed article
2001	Give me that online religion	Brasher, B. E	Peer reviewed article
2007	The Role of the Research Phase in Information Seeking Behaviour of Jewish Studies Scholars: A Modification of Ellis's Behavioural Characteristics.	Bronstein, J.	Peer reviewed article

2000	Surfing Islam: Ayatollahs, shayks and hajjis on the superhighway	Bunt, G. R.	Book chapter
2019	Pilgrimage to hajj	Caidi, N.	Peer reviewed article
2018	On being spiritual: Pilgrimage as an information context	Caidi, N., & Innocenti, P.	Peer reviewed article
2016	Networked theology (engaging culture): Negotiating faith in digital culture	Campbell, H. A., & Garner, S.	Book chapter
2015	Spirituality and everyday information behaviour in a non-Western context: sense-making in Buddhist Laos	Gaston, N., Dorner, D., & Johnstone, D.	Peer reviewed article
2018	Information sharing as embodied practice in a context of conversion to Islam	Guzik, E.	Peer reviewed article
2000	How religious organizations use the Internet: A preliminary inquiry	Horsfall, S.	Book chapter
2000	ON-LINE ETHNOGRAPHY OF DISPENSATIONALIST DISCOURSE REVEALED VERSUS NEGOTIATED TRUTH	Howard, R. G.	Book chapter
2009	Informational uses of spiritual information: an analysis of messages reportedly transmitted by extraphysical means	Kari, J.	Peer reviewed article
2011	Impacts of information: An analysis of spiritual messages	Kari, J.	Book chapter
2011	Outcomes of information: An analysis of spiritual messages	Kari, J.	Peer reviewed article
2007	Information and higher things in life: Addressing the pleasurable and the profound in information science	Kari, J., & Hartel, J.	Peer reviewed article
2018	Information Needs and Behavior of Catholic Priests in Croatia	Lacović, D., & Faletar Tanacković, S.	Peer reviewed article

2010	The information-seeking habits of Baptist ministers	Lambert, J. D.	Peer reviewed article
2000	Religious Movements and the Internet	Mayer, J. F.	Book chapter
2012	Seeking God's Will: The Experience of Information Seeking by Leaders of a Church in Transition/À la recherche de la volonté de Dieu: L'expérience de recherche d' ...	Michels, D. H.	Peer reviewed article
2014	Seeking the will of God: The information seeking experiences of the leaders of Nova Scotia churches in transition	Michels, D. H.	Thesis
1992	The relationship between work roles and information-seeking behaviors among selected protestant ministers in tarrant county, texas	Phillips, R. L.	Thesis
2019	Public libraries as contemplative spaces: A framework for action and research	Pyati, A. K.	Peer reviewed article
2012	The information behavior of clergy members engaged in the sermon preparation task: Wicks revisited	Roland, D.	Peer reviewed article
2008	Interpreting scripture in contemporary times: A study of a clergy member's sense-making behavior in preparing the sunday sermon	Roland, D. R.	Thesis
2013	Information Seeking Behavior of the Ulama in Relation to Preaching and Counseling Roles in Nigeria	Saleh, A. G., & Bakar, A. B. A.	Peer reviewed article
2013	Spiritual journal keeping: An ethnographic study of content, materials, practice, and structure	Siracky, H.	Thesis
1993	The pastor as information professional: An exploratory study of how the ministers of one midwestern community gather and disseminate information.	Tanner, T. M.	Thesis
2015	Cyber sisters: Buddhist women's online activism and practice	Tomalin, E., Starkey, C., & Halafoff, A	Book chapter

2015	“Closer to God”: Meanings of Reading in Recent Conversion Narratives within Christianity and Islam	Vamanu, I., & Guzik, E. (2015)	Peer reviewed article
2013	Investigating religious information searching through analysis of a search engine log	Wan-Chik, R., Clough, P., & Sanderson, M.	Peer reviewed article
2014	THE SECULAR SACRED GALLERY: RELIGION AT TE PAPA TONGAREWA.	Alderton, Z.	Book chapter
2020	I have become all things to all people: Spirituality in Church archives & digital preservation.	Warkentin	Thesis

Participant information Sheet

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What is the research?

This study is called **Information and profound contexts**. Spiritual Information such as poetry, religious/spiritual texts and life stories are often used to create profound activities. However, we lack understanding of how we interact with information for this purpose.

In this study, you will contribute to creating this understanding by sharing your thoughts with the researcher(s) through a semi-structured casual interview.

What will You do?

You are invited to take part in an online video interview. I will ask you questions about spiritual seeking, non-duality and spiritual information. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes.

About the Researchers

We are a team of researchers based in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Strathclyde. The research is funded by the University of Strathclyde. The Principal Investigator, Prof. Ian Ruthven, can be contacted using the details provided on the left.

Participant information Sheet

PhD Researcher: Pranay (Ray) Nangia

Department: Computer and Information Sciences, University of Strathclyde.

Contact Number: 07709047778

Email: pranay.nangia@strath.ac.uk

What happens to the information?

The information gathered will be used to create a description of spiritual seeking and non-duality. It will also be analysed to explore why people seek and use spiritual information. We may use some of your words from the interviews in Pranay's PhD thesis and research publications, but no names or identifying details will ever be used. You have up to seven days after the interview to withdraw, and we will destroy the interview.

Who can access the information?

The information gathered shall be used as part of Pranay's PhD research on Information Behaviour and shall be accessed in its raw form by the researchers only. You will receive a copy of the interview transcript if requested.

No names or identifying details will ever be recorded or made available to anyone.

What happens next?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you would still like to take part, please read and complete the consent form. Thank you for your consideration.

Participant information sheet

Principal Investigator: Prof. Ian Ruthven

Department: Computer and Information Sciences, University of Strathclyde.

Contact Number: 0141 548 3704

Email: ian.ruthven@strath.ac.uk

What is the research?

This study is called **Information Needs and Seeking in Profound Contexts**. Information such as religious texts, mystical poetry, contemplative discussions and spiritual practices are often used in an attempt to bring about insights in order to help individuals find meaning/purpose in life, cope with transitions and lead better lives. However, we do not know to what extent have human spiritual needs been considered in LIS.

This study will survey the perception of the relevance of spiritual needs for the provision of library and information services.

What will you do?

You are invited to participate in an online survey that will record your attitudes and perceptions of human spiritual needs and their relevance to the provision of services at a library or information centre.

About the researchers

We are a team of researchers based in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Strathclyde. The research is funded by the University of Strathclyde. The Principal Investigator, Prof. Ian Ruthven, can be contacted using the details on the left.

Participant information Sheet

PhD Researcher: Pranay (Ray) Nangia

Department: Computer and Information Sciences, University of Strathclyde.

Contact Number: +447709047778

Email: pranay.nangia@strath.ac.uk

What happens to the information?

The information gathered will be used to create an evidence base and theoretical account of the role of information in higher contexts. A summary of the anonymised findings will be made.

We may use some of your words from the survey in a report we will write for PhD Research and other outputs (e.g. publications and presentations), but no names or identifying information will ever be used. There is a final question allowing for a contact email to be provided for follow-up questions, this is completely optional, and participants should not feel pressured to provide this.

Who can access the information?

The information gathered shall be used as part of ongoing research on Information Behaviour and accessed in its raw form by the researchers only. You will receive a copy of any published work in

this respect if requested. The survey can be taken anonymously, no names or identifying details will ever be made available to anyone apart from the researchers.

What happens next?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you still want to participate, please click here to take the survey now. Thank you for your consideration.

List of questions asked of each interviewee in Study One

Gayatri	Q1	What is Monte Sahaja?
	Q2	What is it like to work closely with Mooji?
	Q3	What aspect of Mooji's pointings resonates the most with you?
Gurudas	Q4	Could you describe your journey to Satsang with Mooji?
Thor	Q5	Was there an interaction with Mooji that touched you deeply?
Nirmala	Q6	How did your life change after attending Satsang?
	Q7	What about your family?
Mahima	Q8	When did you come to Monte Sahaja & How is your life here?
	Q9	How is it to move so closely with Mooji?
	Q10	What is Mooji like off-camera?
	Q11	How would you describe Monte Sahaja?
	Q12	What have you discovered from following Mooji's pointings for so long?
Shiva Shankar	Q13	How did you come to meet Mooji?
	Q14	How was that first retreat for you?
	Q15	What are the people like at Monte Sahaja?
	Q16	How is it to move so closely with Mooji?
Govinda	Q17	How have Mooji's pointings impacted your life?
	Q18	What inspired you to ask for a new spiritual name?
	Q19	What is Mooji like in everyday life?
	Q20	Is there anything else you would like to share?
Siddhartha	Q21	What was your journey to Satsang with Mooji?
	Q22	Could you speak a bit about your experience of coming to Sahaja?
	Q23	How has Satsang affected your relationships?

	Q24	What is your understanding of Mooji's pointings?
	Q25	What is Mooji like?
Lakshmi	Q26	How did you meet Mooji?
	Q27	How was life at Monte Sahaja in the early days?
	Q28	When did you know that Monte Sahaja would be an Ashram?
	Q29	Have you experienced growth in yourself and the Sangha since those early days?
	Q30	What changes have you experienced in your life since meeting Mooji & coming to Monte Sahaja?
	Q31	What is Mooji like in day-to-day life?
Namdev	Q32	What brought you to Monte Sahaja?
	Q33	What is it like to meet Mooji?
	Q34	Which of Mooji's pointings resonate most with you?
	Q35	What changes have you experienced in your life since following Mooji's guidance?
	Q36	Could you share one touching experience that you had with Mooji?
	Q37	Where do you stand in your understanding of what Mooji is pointing to?
	Q38	Is there anything else that you would like to share?
Mukti	Q39	What brought you to Satsang with Mooji?
	Q40	Can you speak a little bit about Mooji's way of guidance?
	Q41	How has Satsang impacted your relationships?
	Q42	Can you tell us a bit about your role at Monte Sahaja?
	Q43	What is important for you?
	Q44	What does the future mean to you?
	Q45	Do you still have desires?
Amara	Q46	What brought you to Satsang with Mooji?

	Q47	Which of Mooji's pointings resonates with you?
	Q48	Do you have any desires?
	Q49	Is there anything else that you would like to share?
Bholenath	Q50	Could you say something about Bhajans?
	Q51	Which of Mooji's pointings resonate with you the most?
	Q52	Is there anything else that you would like to share?
Nirmal	Q53	How did you come across Mooji's pointings?
	Q54	What was your first retreat with Mooji like?
	Q55	What have you discovered from following Mooji's guidance?
	Q56	Could you speak about the significance of Bhajans for you?
	Q57	Coming from a Christian background how is it to sing the names of Hindu gods?
	Q58	Could you share one impactful moment you had with Mooji?
Shivam	Q59	Why did you start following Satsang with Mooji?
	Q60	How was your first retreat with Mooji?
	Q61	Which of Mooji's pointings had the greatest impact on you?
	Q62	What have you discovered from following Mooji's guidance?

Spiritual Needs in LIS – America

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q4 Thank you for your interest in this survey.

Spiritual needs are defined as needs and expectations that individuals have to find meaning, purpose, and value in their life.
This survey attempts to understand practising librarians views regarding spiritual needs and library provision.

Before continuing, please read the participant information sheet here: https://tinyurl.com/y3j5npbe (Please copy and paste the link into your browser)

Q6 Do you consent to take part in this survey?

- Yes, I consent (1)
- No, I do not consent (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you consent to take part in this survey? = No, I do not consent

Page Break

Q1 During your time as a library and information professional, how often have library users, either directly or indirectly, expressed the following spiritual needs?

	Often (1)	Occasionally (2)	Rarely (3)	Never (4)
To be accepted as a person (1)	○	○	○	○
To give or receive love (2)	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of connection with the world (3)	○	○	○	○
For companionship (4)	○	○	○	○
For kindness and compassion (5)	○	○	○	○
For spiritual care of their bodily needs (6)	○	○	○	○
To experience laughter and a sense of humour (7)	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of peace and contentment (8)	○	○	○	○
To perform religious or spiritual rituals (9)	○	○	○	○
To read spiritual or religious material (10)	○	○	○	○
To participate in religious or spiritual services (11)	○	○	○	○
To pray (12)	○	○	○	○

To keep a positive outlook (13)	○	○	○	○
To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect (14)	○	○	○	○
To be thankful or grateful (15)	○	○	○	○
To feel hopeful (16)	○	○	○	○
To find meaning in suffering (17)	○	○	○	○
To find meaning and purpose in life (18)	○	○	○	○
To live an ethical or moral life (19)	○	○	○	○
To seek forgiveness (20)	○	○	○	○
To experience or appreciate music (21)	○	○	○	○
To experience or appreciate nature (22)	○	○	○	○
To experience or appreciate beauty (23)	○	○	○	○
To review their life (24)	○	○	○	○
To address concerns about life after death (25)	○	○	○	○
To address unmet issues before death (26)	○	○	○	○

To have a deeper understanding of death (27)	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Carry Forward All Choices – Displayed & Hidden from "During your time as a library and information professional, how often have library users, either directly or indirectly, expressed the following spiritual needs?"

Q2 Is it important for professionals to consider the following spiritual needs when providing resources and services at a library or information center?

	Definitely yes (41)	Perhaps yes (42)	Perhaps not (43)	Definitely not (44)	No opinion (45)
To be accepted as a person (x1)	○	○	○	○	○
To give or receive love (x2)	○	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of connection with the world (x3)	○	○	○	○	○
For companionship (x4)	○	○	○	○	○
For kindness and compassion (x5)	○	○	○	○	○
For spiritual care of their bodily needs (x6)	○	○	○	○	○
To experience laughter and a sense of humour (x7)	○	○	○	○	○
To feel a sense of peace and contentment (x8)	○	○	○	○	○
To perform religious or	○	○	○	○	○

spiritual rituals (x9)					
To read spiritual or religious material (x10)	○	○	○	○	○
To participate in religious or spiritual services (x11)	○	○	○	○	○
To pray (x12)	○	○	○	○	○
To keep a positive outlook (x13)	○	○	○	○	○
To have a quiet space to meditate or reflect (x14)	○	○	○	○	○
To be thankful or grateful (x15)	○	○	○	○	○
To feel hopeful (x16)	○	○	○	○	○
To find meaning in suffering (x17)	○	○	○	○	○
To find meaning and purpose in life (x18)	○	○	○	○	○
To live an ethical or moral life (x19)	○	○	○	○	○
To seek forgiveness (x20)	○	○	○	○	○
To experience or appreciate music (x21)	○	○	○	○	○

To experience or appreciate nature (x22)	○	○	○	○	○
To experience or appreciate beauty (x23)	○	○	○	○	○
To review their life (x24)	○	○	○	○	○
To address concerns about life after death (x25)	○	○	○	○	○
To address unmet issues before death (x26)	○	○	○	○	○
To have a deeper understanding of death (x27)	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q3 These needs have been studied in the contexts of positive psychology, nursing and healthcare. Do you think they have a place in library provision? Please provide any personal thoughts or experiences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Q12 What kind of libraries have you worked in?

- [ ] Academic (1)
- [ ] Public (2)
- [ ] School (3)
- [ ] Special (4)
- [ ] Other (5)
- [ ] None (6)

Q11 In which country do you currently work?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q14 If you are happy to be contacted with some follow up questions, please provide your email address in the box below (this is completely optional and may be left blank)

_____

End of Block: Block 2