

Exploring the Digital Medusa: Ssnakes, Sstorytelling, and Sserious Leisure

by

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Abstract

This research project collected a sample of nine single-authored websites of classical mythology in order to determine whether they could be conceived of as a serious leisure activity under Robert A. Stebbins' Serious Leisure Perspective. Data was manually collected from these websites using a customized rubric that focused on the authors of these websites, rather than their users, and which evolved organically throughout the data collection process. The respective articles on each website about the mythological figure of Medusa was used as a case study for all such articles. Analysis of these authors and their websites was done using three branches of investigation represented by each of the three chapters: applying the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) in order to understand how these websites function as leisure activities and fit into existing models of leisure; applying three perspectives borrowed from Library and Information Studies/Science(s) (LIS) (Information Behaviour, Information Architecture, and Bibliometrics) in order to identify and analyze the information phenomena occurring on these websites; and applying the perspectives common in studies of Adaptation in order to understand these websites as a part of a larger interpretive and expressive tradition in an interdisciplinary context. Inductive qualitative analysis was then performed on the results of each branch of analysis—tying the three approaches together—and revealing the extensive dedication of these authors to their websites, urging scholars to take them (and other similar hobbyist websites) as seriously as their creators do. This project concluded that the websites in question were expressions of their authors' knowledge about classical mythology, gathered as a part of their belletristic liberal arts hobby. It also demonstrated that mythological stories can be considered, in themselves, a source of information, and that the work of creating adaptations is, in itself, a serious leisure activity.

Furthermore, the activity of adaptation—that is, the gathering, understanding, and re-presentation of knowledge about a particular narrative—comprises a complex and recursive interplay of information behaviours suitable for further study. Therefore, this research project provides insight into the Serious Leisure Perspective, Information Behaviours, and Storytelling as a method of information exchange, furthering the understanding of stories as information and leisure across multiple disciplines. This project also demonstrates that, while challenging and somewhat limiting, it is *possible* to conduct this style of analysis on documented leisure activities *without* interacting with leisure participants or using computer-aided data collection and analysis methods. Finally, this project identifies paths for future inquiry and further analysis into these and other, similar hobbyist websites.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Information systems are a “set of components for collecting, creating, storing, processing, and distributing information, typically including hardware and software, system users, and the data itself.”¹ While in many cases these systems are created by academic or commercial institutions, often by hiring a panel of experts, others are created by a single, passionate person. That second case is the focus of this project: single-authored websites, not sponsored by a commercial or academic body, about classical mythology. What can be said about the nature and efficiency of information resources they made? What insights do these systems provide about the thought process, behaviours, and motivations of their creators? And what claims do the authors themselves make on these sites, about themselves and about their creations?

In essence, this project is interested in examining systems of information (websites) in order to learn more about the humans who made them (the websites' creators). This includes learning about their motivations for and process of creation as well as linking the resulting insights to the ways in which scholars understand the concepts of leisure, information behaviours, and adaptation—both separately and as a group. In order to do so, this project borrows a variety of tools and inhabits a selection of perspectives inspired by a collection of disciplines and areas of study. Library and Information Studies/Science(s) (LIS) is/are interested in asking questions of information such as: what is it, how is it used, and how can it be used more effectively?² Those are broad questions, and they reflect the broad nature of LIS itself.

1 “Information System,” *Dictionary.com*, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/information-system>.

2 Allen Konrad, *On inquiry: Human concept formation and construction of meaning through library and information science intermediation*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 652-653.

Being interested in the processes of and behaviours around information, rather than individual topics,³ LIS researchers are often nimble collaborators. They are able to work within wide swathes of topical content, borrow methods and tools from a variety of sources, and act flexibly both alone and as a part of a team. Therefore, it is not surprising that this project makes extensive use of the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP)—a framework created as a part of Leisure Studies, itself an area of Sociology. Adopting the SLP gives structure to efforts made (as in the case of this project) to extend research in LIS beyond the scholarly and professional, and into the domain of leisure.⁴ It encourages other disciplines to take leisure seriously by illuminating its intense presence in the lives of human beings.⁵ It is not the only tool available to prospective LIS researchers, but it is a fruitful one. On the other hand, LIS gives some structure to leisure scholars in their quest to study the myriad ways leisure and information intersect (which is sorely needed as “patterns of storage, retrieval, and dissemination vary considerably from one core activity to another”).⁶

This research project is, by its nature, interdisciplinary. Chapter One is focused on serious leisure and how Stebbins' SLP framework can help us understand the human element of these websites, thus encouraging scholars (leisure or otherwise) to take these websites as seriously as their authors do. This chapter highlights the way these authors' participation in the leisure activity of website creation is a huge part of their lives and identities. Chapter Two looks at the

3 Marcia J. Bates, “The invisible substrate of information science,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 50, no. 12 (1999): 1043-50, 1044.

4 Robert A. Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2007), 92.; Jenna Hartel, “The serious leisure frontier in library and information science: Hobby domains,” *Knowledge Organization* 30, no. 3/4 (2003): 228-38, 229.; Jenna Hartel, “Serious Leisure,” in *Theories of Information Behaviour*, eds. Karen E. Fischer, Sandra Erdelez, and Lynne McKechnie (New Jersey: Information Today Inc, 2005), 313-317, 316.

5 Hartel, “Serious Leisure,” 316.

6 Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 92.

information phenomena present in this leisure activity in more depth by applying a selection of LIS tools. Using a variety of methods from the discipline of LIS allows this project to consider how leisure participants use information to enact and express their hobby, including the ways in which the authors in question find, evaluate, make sense of, organize, and synthesize the materials they deal with during the creation of their websites. This chapter provides insights into the ways traditionally recognized information behaviour interact throughout the process of creating an adaptation, and argues that this process is made up of several distinct information behaviours that are enacted both simultaneously and recursively. Chapter Three attempts to connect these two areas of study, and this research project, with a broader tapestry of disciplines that all look at the ways stories get re-told over time and across cultures. This chapter reinforces the idea that adaptation can be considered both a serious leisure activity unto itself, as well as a complex information behaviour that simultaneously directs the gathering, evaluation, sense-making, use, and sharing of information with regards to a particular story or narrative. This is done by investigating the ways in which adaptation is understood by a variety of disciplines, and comparing that to the ways in which this project understands adaptation through the lens of its corpus, as well as the ways in which the authors of each website understand their own process.

These websites might be seen as redundant in the age of Wikipedia. The information provided by the authors about classical mythology might not be up to the standards of an academic journal, but that does not mean these websites are without value. Likewise, studying leisure can sometimes be seen as “frivolous” or unimportant by academia at large. This study hopes to challenge that notion. While this type of research may not be well appreciated or understood, this thesis makes it clear that these websites are great undertakings and that they are

deeply important to the lives and identities of their authors; they should be considered worthy of respect and academic engagement. Performing analysis on a corpus such as this one also provides valuable insights into a variety of academic fields. For instance, this project centres the needs of *authors* rather than *users* when examining websites. This fundamentally alters the approach taken by researchers. The effectiveness of user interfaces becomes secondary to the creator's sense of fulfillment and accomplishment, or what lead them to make certain decisions about how to organize the information on their websites.

Research Questions

The specific research questions that shape this research are as follows:

1. How do these websites, their content, and their creators challenge or support the theory of serious leisure and, more specifically, the leisure arts hobby expounded therein?
2. What information phenomena are evident in the creation and presentation of these websites?
3. How do broader ideas of storytelling and adaptation interact with information phenomena and the concept of leisure?
4. What can be learned about these websites and their authors' activities using a method that excludes participant interaction as well as any computer-aided data collection/analysis?

Secondary Objectives of the Study

Part of the goal of this research is to demonstrate the extent to which a methodology that avoids

contact with participants or computer-aided data collection can be used to study serious leisure. Much of the research done on serious leisure requires contact with participants which may not always be possible. By making an effort to design a methodology that eschews contact with participants but succeeds in a robust analysis of leisure participants and their activities, this project can help researchers design research questions to avoid those pitfalls in the future without having to avoid an entire corpus. Descriptive findings and an interdisciplinary approach provides many opportunities to pursue research into similar corpora. This project also attempts to further research into websites using a creator-first perspective by providing an example of a rubric custom-built for that purpose.⁷ Although the website rubric presented in this methodology section is highly customized, it will at least provide a jumping-off point for future researchers to design their own rubrics. The tools and methods that helps inspire the rubric are all outlined in this methodology and may prove more helpful than the custom rubric itself.

Significance of the Study

Stebbins states that liberal arts hobbies, and the expressions of those hobbies are both understudied and under understood by leisure scholars.⁸ Although this project approaches these websites from the author's point-of-view, it is not unreasonable to assume users look to these information resources to develop their own leisure careers.⁹ Therefore, their study—both through this project and through other possible future projects—provides insights ranging from how a

7 In this case, creator-first refers to the perspective that a website is interpreted through. Rather than evaluate a website through the eyes of its user (Is it easy to navigate? Does it have the information they need?), the website is evaluated through the eyes of its author (Why was it created? Does it adequately fulfill that purpose?).

8 Robert A. Stebbins, *The Committed Reader: Reading for Utility, Pleasure, and Fulfillment in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2013), 85-86.

9 See the section on social worlds for a further discussion of how these websites might fit into their leisure communities.

single leisure participant operates, to larger trends in serious leisure communities, most notably with regard to how information circulates within them. This project also strives to show that these single-authored websites, void of backing by commercial or scholarly institutions, are worthy of study and deserve to be taken seriously.

It is hoped that this work will appeal to a wide array of scholars (and non-scholars), with a mosaic of backgrounds and areas of interest, and encourage future interdisciplinary work by pointing out the myriad ways that these websites (and other similar works) could be studied in the future. This study could also be of particular interest to those without a Classics degree who may be teaching classical mythology in elementary or high schools and may be looking to see which online resources are appropriate to use as teaching materials and why. The focus this thesis places on adaptation can be applied broadly. Chapter Three works to bridge scholarship on storytelling and adaptation across six disciplines: Cultural Studies, Classics, Film Studies, Fan Studies, Folklore Studies, and Translation Studies. This demonstrates how widely relevant the study of adaptation can be, once again affirming the importance and worth of doing research on this type of corpus.

This thesis positions the creation of the sampled websites as a method of expression for their authors, furthering the scholarship being done in the area of liberal arts hobbies. More specifically, this research project studies a particular way hobbyists express their knowledge (i.e. by making websites) and their reasons for doing so. Liberal arts hobbies and their expressions are relatively understudied areas of the SLP. Accordingly, this project recommends some alterations to the sub-types of liberal arts hobbies, as Stebbins acknowledges that that area of his taxonomy is unfinished.¹⁰

¹⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 86.

Finally, this thesis provides a method by which information behaviours of leisure participants can be studied without needing to contact them or engage in participant observation, something that is rarely done in the intersection of LIS and serious leisure. It also describes the complex interplay of information behaviours that happen chronologically, concurrently, and recursively throughout the process of creating adaptations or engaging in a liberal arts hobby. Furthermore, it establishes two approaches to studying information phenomena relating to leisure that are often overlooked in favour of information behaviour. Utilizing Information Architecture and Bibliometrics, researchers can examine the information resources, systems, and spaces with which leisure participants interact. Bibliometrics allows researcher to establish a core set of texts common to a specific hobby, and information architecture provides a method to learn about the ways a leisure participant understands and chooses to express the structure and organization of the information they have gathered. These approaches could likewise be applied to other forms of adaptation, outside the context of this study and this corpus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classical mythology is a part of western culture, referenced in our everyday lives. A number of information resources on Classics exist on the internet and are easily accessible, offering hobbyists amazing access to informational material. They may even decide to create their own. So how might one go about studying this type of resource? This project follows in the footsteps of other leisure scholars, combining the complementary focus of the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) and Library and Information Studies (LIS) to study single-authored websites about classical mythology in order to understand the ways in which these authors care about and create adaptations. It should be noted that, due to the breadth of scholarship quoted and the indirect manner of which it is often applied, this literature review is primarily concerned with introducing the reader to concepts and tools that will be used by each chapter of this thesis.

Defining Concepts

Serious Leisure

According to Robert A. Stebbins, sociologist and architect of the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP), serious leisure is a “systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling in nature for the participant to find a career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.”¹¹ He compares serious leisure to casual leisure (an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable core activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it”),¹² and

¹¹ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, xii.

¹² Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, xii.

project-based leisure (“a short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time, or time free of disagreeable obligation.”)¹³ It is important to note that, in Stebbins’ framework, each core activity is sensitive to context and could be classified as any of the three types of leisure.¹⁴ For example, a core activity such as “painting” may be serious for one practitioner who has engaged deeply in the hobby for many years, casual for another practitioner who is playing with friends or children, or project-based for a third practitioner wanting to complete a tutorial and finish a specific painting. What makes a leisure activity “serious” is the subject of the second chapter of this thesis.

Liberal Arts Hobby

The Serious Leisure Perspective has been steadily expanding for 40 years, adding leisure phenomena that were overlooked by the framework as researchers become aware of them.¹⁵ Liberal arts hobbies were added to the taxonomy as their own separate category in 1994 after “Stebbins realized that some hobbyists favored learning about a topic more so than practicing it in any other way. In these cases, the process of becoming knowledgeable was the core activity of the hobby, not a means to some other end.”¹⁶ The liberal arts hobby was defined as exhibiting “the systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake.”¹⁷ They can therefore be seen as a distinct category, separate from other forms of serious leisure.¹⁸

13 Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, xii.

14 Jenna Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” *Journal of Documentation* 70, no. 5 (2014): 945-962, 947.

15 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 949.

16 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 949.

17 Robert A. Stebbins, “The liberal arts hobbies: A neglected subtype of serious leisure,” *Society and Leisure* 17, no. 1 (1994): 173-186, 175.

18 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 948.

Information Behaviour

Information Behaviour is a term used by the academic discipline of LIS in reference to “the many ways in which human beings interact with information.”¹⁹ It can be considered a sub-discipline of the field.²⁰ This concept includes behaviours such as information production, management, and dissemination, although they are often neglected by information behaviour models in favour of the behaviours of information seeking and use.²¹ The behaviours surrounding the processing and dissemination of information are particularly important to this study, as the corpus is made up of the published writings of liberal arts hobbyists rather than the interviews of participants that ask questions about their information-seeking behaviours. Some methods of studying information behaviour also investigate the motivations of users for accessing a resource, although this study focuses more on the motivations for creating a resource.²² This research primarily focuses on Hektor's model due to its broad nature and previous application to leisure arts hobbies.²³ This model—and the concept of information behaviour—will be revisited in more detail in the next section of this literature review.

Describing Tools

As opposed to concepts—which are general terms used throughout this thesis—this section

19 Marcia J. Bates, “Information Behavior,” in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, third edition, eds. Marcia J. Bates and Mary Niles Maack (New York: CRC Press, 2010): 2381-2391, 2381.

20 Bates, “Information Behavior,” 2381.

21 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, “Information Activity in Serious Leisure,” *Information Research: An International Electronic Journal* 21, no. 4 (December 1, 2016). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1123254.pdf>, 14.

22 Ben Booth, “Understanding the Information Needs of Visitors to Museums,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17, no. 2 (1998): 139-157.; Kate Haley Goldman and David Schaller, “Exploring Motivational Factors and Visitor Satisfaction in On-Line Museum Visits,” *Museums and the Web*, 2004. <http://www.museumsandtheweb.com/mw2004/papers/haleyGoldman/haleyGoldman.html>.

23 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

focuses on describing the tools and/or frameworks this study uses in each of its chapters in order to structure its approach to the analysis and understanding of these websites.

The Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP)

The Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) is a theoretical framework, invented by the sociologist Robert A. Stebbins for use in the field of leisure studies. It synthesizes three main forms of leisure: casual, project-based, and serious.²⁴ It is “a well elaborated grounded theory about the nature of leisure activity... developed into an interdisciplinary research program and the predominant approach to the study of hobbies.”²⁵ The SLP examines the distinctive features, similarities, and interrelationships of each of the three forms of leisure. “The Serious Leisure Perspective offers a classification and explanation of all leisure activities and experiences, [as] framed in the social psychological, social, cultural, geographical, and historical conditions in which each activity and accompanying experience take place.”²⁶ It is important to note that, as of his 2013 book, Stebbins has amended the serious leisure branch of his taxonomy; it is now paired with “devotee work” under the umbrella of serious pursuits.²⁷ These used to be separate, as work and leisure, but through his later work and the work of like-minded scholars, Stebbins has made an effort to acknowledge the extensive overlap between the two. Stebbins' updated taxonomy is shown in the figure below where an arrow points to the liberal arts pursuits, where these websites should be considered to fit, according to Chapter One.²⁸

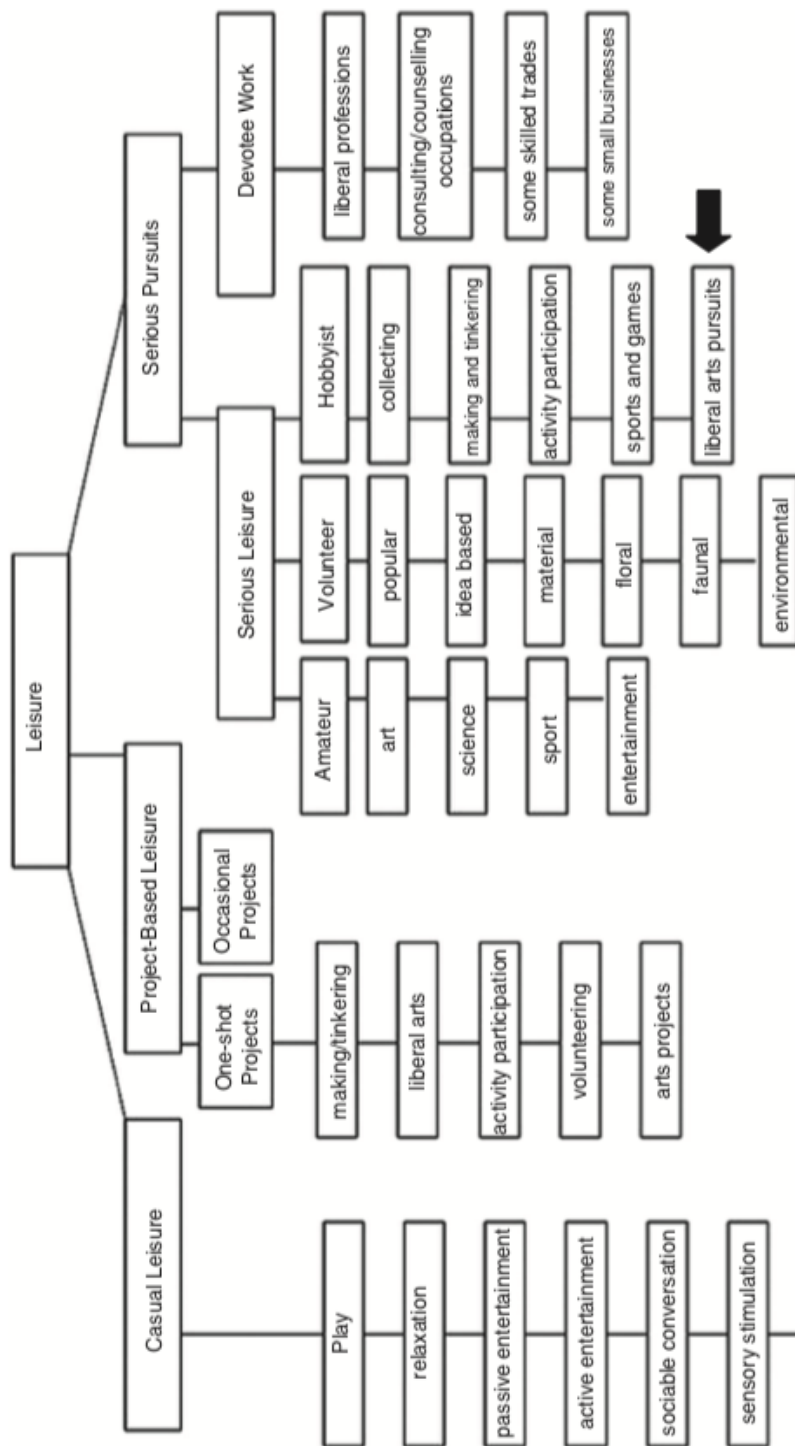
24 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 24-25.

25 Jenna Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, Published Doctoral Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of California, 2007), 46.

26 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 25.

27 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 25.

28 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 948.



Notes: The topic of this paper, the liberal arts hobby is denoted with an arrow and can be located as follows:
leisure > serious pursuits > serious leisure > hobbyist > liberal arts hobby

Source: Diagram formulated by Jenna Hartel

Figure 1: The Serious Leisure Perspective²⁹

²⁹ Hartel, "An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby," 948.

Hektor's Model of Information Activities

The concept of information behaviour has been in use since the mid 1960s among scholars such as Tom Wilson,³⁰ and Saul Herner and Mary Herner³¹—though Herbert Menzel's paper on information needs and uses did not directly reference the term, instead using “communications behaviour” and “communication activities.”³² In 1968 William Paisley, “one of the earliest advocates of the behavioural approach to information seeking,”³³ announced a call to arms for scholars, saying “we urgently need theories of information-processing behavior that will generate propositions concerning [information] channel selection, amount of seeking, effects on productivity of information quality, quantity, currency and diversity, the role of motivational factors, etc.”³⁴ Thus began the attempts to develop models for information behaviour.³⁵

Hektor's model proposes eight information activities (search & retrieve, browse, monitor, unfold, exchange, dress, instruct and publish) which manifest from four types of information behaviour: seeking, gathering, communicating and giving information.³⁶ This model was created in part to “characterize how people use the internet in relation to other information systems,”³⁷ and “was centred on everyday life, that is non-work, or private aspects of people's lives... [and] incorporated the immediate social world of the actor,”³⁸ making it relevant to the study of serious leisure (non-work) undertaken in part through the internet and the communities therein. This

30 Tom D. Wilson, “Models in Information Behavior Research,” *Journal of Documentation* 55, no. 3 (1999): 249–70, 250.

31 Saul Herner and Mary Herner, “Information Needs and Uses in Science and Technology,” in *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, vol. 2, ed. Carlos A. Cuadra (New York: Interscience, 1967), 1–33, 29–30.

32 Reijo Savolainen, “Information Behaviour and Information Practice: Reviewing the 'Umbrella Concepts' of Information-Seeking Studies,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 77, no. 2 (April 2007): 109–132, 112.

33 Savolainen, 113.

34 William Paisley, “Information Needs and Uses,” in *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, vol. 3, ed. Carlos A. Cuadra (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968), 1–30, 1.

35 Savolainen, 113.

36 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

37 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 4.

38 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 4.

model is more holistic than many others, as it includes that methods by which information is created, used, and shared (not just how it is found), making it well-suited to a study on how informational websites *came to be* and *why*.

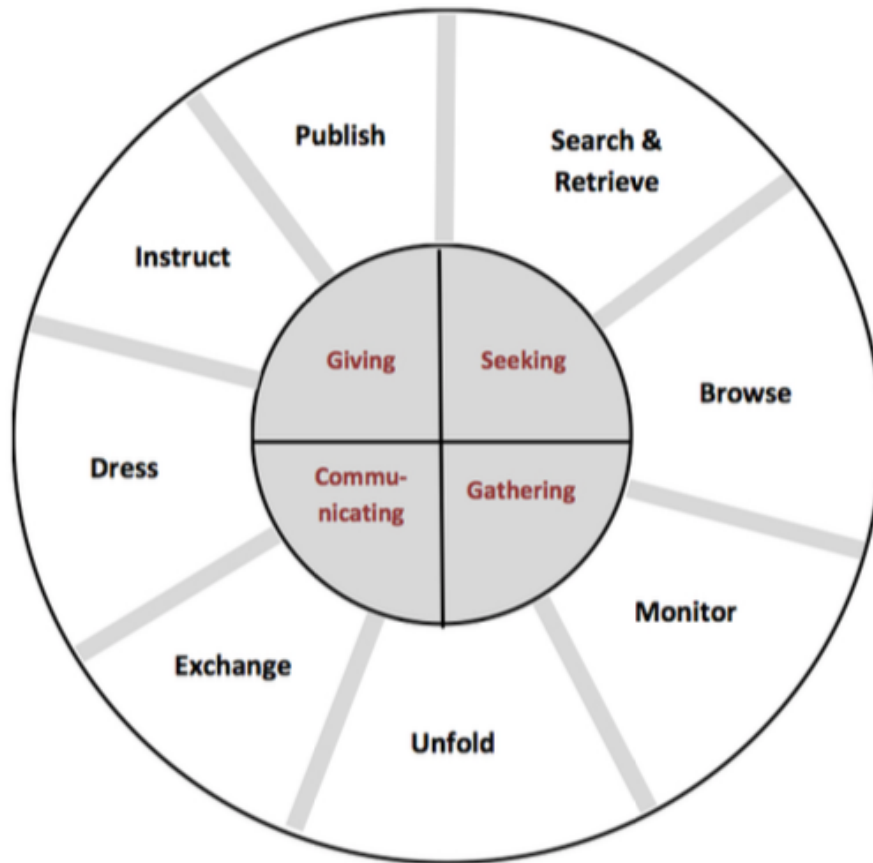


Figure 2: Hektor's Information Activities Model³⁹

The history of this model and the reasons why it was selected for this study is expounded in greater length in Chapter Two.

Information Architecture

“Information architecture is the practice of deciding how to arrange the parts of something to be

³⁹ This image was borrowed, with gratitude, from: Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

understandable.”⁴⁰ In other words, information architecture is what occurs when one is creating a structure for delivering information, it “allows us to understand where we are as users, and where the information we want is in relation to our position.”⁴¹ It began in the 1970s, before the internet became ubiquitous, and has its roots in a number of different fields, including LIS.⁴² Cataloguing and archival science are elements of LIS that translate directly to the work of information architects whose goal “is to create an information architecture that has appropriate and usable metadata, with content available in a well-maintained archive.”⁴³ Although information architecture is not exclusively tied to web design, the two are deeply linked.⁴⁴ Sitemaps, hierarchies, categorizations, and navigation are the results of information architecture.⁴⁵ These elements exist on the websites in the sample, and are examined in Chapter Two of this thesis. By examining these organizing structures, inferences can be made about how the authors of these websites conceptualize the information they are handling.

Bibliometrics and Citation Analysis

Bibliometrics is “a quantitative method for evaluating the literature in different disciplines,”⁴⁶ or more specifically, “the quantitative study of literatures as they are reflected in bibliographies.”⁴⁷

40 “What is Information Architecture?” *The Information Architecture Institute*, <https://www.iainstitute.org/what-is-ia> (accessed February 19, 2019).

41 UX Booth Editorial Team, “Complete Beginner's Guide to Information Architecture,” *UX Booth*, December 22, 2015, <https://www.uxbooth.com/articles/complete-beginners-guide-to-information-architecture/> (accessed February 19, 2019).

42 UX Booth Editorial Team.

43 UX Booth Editorial Team.

44 Taylor and Joudrey, 20.

45 UX Booth Editorial Team.

46 Farideh Osareh, “Bibliometrics, Citation Analysis and Co-Citation Analysis: A Review of Literature,” *I. Libri*. 46 (1996): 149-158, 149.

47 Howard D. White and Kate W. McCain, “Bibliometrics,” *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 24 (1989): 119-186, 119.

It evolved in a number of disciplines and has been widely studied and applied in the field of LIS.⁴⁸ Researchers perform statistical studies on bibliographies in order to measure various qualities of academic literature in and across specific fields such as its growth over time, predominance in certain geographic locations, or interdisciplinarity. Bibliometrics can also be used to map sub-disciplines within a single field. Traditionally, bibliometric analysis attempts to study the body of a literature first through descriptive categories by counting its contributing countries, authors, journals, year of publications, and disciplines, and second through more evaluative means using citation analysis.⁴⁹

Citation analysis is a sub-set of bibliometrics which is concerned with the relationships formed between components of the literature.⁵⁰ It evaluates a body of work through its citations in order to rank works and publications according to their importance, identify core literature, trace the diffusion of ideas, measure the impact of works and publications, study subject interrelationships, investigate the structure of knowledge, and improve bibliographic control.⁵¹ It can do this kind of work because citations “give substantive expression to the process of innovation... the presence of a citation may signify that author A has been influenced by the work of author B.”⁵² With enough citations tracing enough relationships between scholars, articles, and the ideas they are exchanging, patterns can be identified across an entire body of work, however large.

48 Dangzhi Zhao, “Bibliometrics and LIS education: How do they fit together?” *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 48, no. 1 (2012): 1-4, 1.

49 Osareh, 151.

50 Osareh, 151.

51 Osareh, 152.

52 Blaise Cronin, *The Citation Process: The Role and Significance of Citations in Scientific Communication* (London: Taylor Graham, 1984), 25-26.

Authors are not restricted to the scholarly pursuits, although it is easiest to identify citations when they are represented by a footnote and a page number; citations simply pay an intellectual debt.⁵³ “They [are] a tax on reusable knowledge.”⁵⁴ Studying them in whatever form gives a measure of how an idea is rated, treated as legitimate, or ignored altogether.⁵⁵ Jack Zipes notes the way that a single highly-influential version of a folktale becomes impossible to ignore and forces newer versions to acknowledge its existence before proceeding with their own version of the story (much like a scholar must cite the intellectual context surrounding their topic before being allowed to enter the conversation and make their own observations, theories, and conclusions): “the Disney Studios have been able to retain a market stranglehold on fairy-tale films up to the present. Any other filmmaker who has endeavoured to adapt a fairy tale for the screen, whether through animation or other means, has had to measure up to the Disney standard and try to go beyond it”⁵⁶ Applying bibliometrics and citation analysis to *any* body of work can help scholars tease out trends and influences, as well theorize their consequences, just as Zipes discusses above. Citation analysis and bibliometrics can also be applied to books, video, images, and other media to study their use and publication patterns.⁵⁷ Thus, applying them to the sampled websites (which are not academic journals) may still yield interesting patterns.

Methods of Adaptation

The last tool utilized by this thesis is one of my own devising. The literature of six different

53 Shaun Goldfish and Kiyoshi Yamamoto, *Prometheus Assessed?: Research Measurement, Peer Review, and Citation Analysis* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2012), 67.

54 Goldfish and Yamamoto, 67.

55 Goldfish and Yamamoto, 67.

56 Jack Zipes, *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 89.

57 Osareh, 150-151.

fields was considered and compared in an attempt to create an overarching theory of adaptation that was flexible enough to apply to any kind of adaptation, including the articles on the websites that were sampled. The disciplines were selected due to their nuanced approaches to studying a story that is told in multiple instances, undergoing changes over multiple axes (such as time, medium, authors, etc): i.e. adaptation. The six disciplines (and/or sub-disciplines) were: the study of classical mythology (a sub-set of Classics), Cultural Studies, Adaptation Theory (from Film Studies), Fan Fiction Studies (from Fan Studies), Folklore Studies, and Translation Studies. They are all interdisciplinary fields which borrow heavily from each other and disciplines beyond, encouraging the development of a generalized theory of approach while remaining grounded in a history of scholarship.

Comparing the ways in which each discipline discussed the study and/or creation of adaptations led to the discovery of a certain commonality in the form of three overarching methods used to create an adaptation. Not every discipline used or studied all three. A visualization of this comparison and the presence of each method in the literature of a specific field can be found in Chapter Three, titled “Figure 6: A Visual Literature Review of Recurring Trends in the Study of Adaptations.” The three methods of adaptation that were identified are: Literal Adaptations (word-by-word adaptations, such as a preliminary translation of a work into a new language), Spirit Adaptations (an adaptation which aims to be faithful to the original author as possible, but is freer than Literal Adaptation), and Creative Adaptations (an adaptation which is concerned with making something new and interesting out of the source material). These terms and their definitions are elaborated upon in Chapter Three.

Connecting the Dots

“The field of leisure science offers a wealth of insights into hobbies as activities and social realms, but fails to explicate or theorize information phenomena.”⁵⁸ In the course of creating their websites, each of these authors had to somehow come by the information that they then turned into content. And, of course, that content takes the form of an adaptation. It is this convergence of factors that makes an interdisciplinary approach not only feasible, but useful.

The authors of these websites are enacting a complex and recursive set of information behaviours while gathering, processing, and presenting their knowledge about classical mythology. Hektor's information activities model provides this study with a structure that guides a discussion of these behaviours. These behaviours do not happen in isolation. The authors are interacting with information using information resources, in information spaces, and using information systems. They are simultaneously contributing to those resources, spaces, and systems as a part of the process of creating their websites. Using Bibliometrics to study the information resources that these hobbyists turn to most frequently helps to inform the way this study understands the information behaviours at play on the part of individual hobbyists, as well as discover large trends in the community created by these website-creating hobbyists who are interested in classical mythology. Information Architecture adds a further dimension to this study as it guides an analysis of the structure of the websites in question, interrogating the choices the authors made when organizing their information in a certain way. These choices are, in themselves, an expression of information behaviours, demonstrating the complexity of the creation process. Furthermore, the content that is being arranged and presented is made up of adaptations. Adaptation is an out-put as well as a process. Source material must be selected,

⁵⁸ Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 10.

sorted, and synthesized. This process is a demonstration of information behaviour at work, and requires adaptors to interact with information sources, spaces, and systems. The systematic and fervent pursuit of knowledge is the core activity of a liberal arts hobby.⁵⁹ Hobbyists engage with information on a particular topic by both acquiring and expressing it.⁶⁰ Thus the activity of adapting a body of work (such as classical mythology) can qualify as a liberal arts hobby if it is done with great passion, over a long period of time, and with no end in sight.

Combining multiple approaches facilitates a more robust analysis of these websites than would have been possible using only a single tool or framework. While the SLP testifies to the devotion and seriousness of the authors, LIS tools investigate the process of data collection and consideration which ultimately culminate in an expression, and the lens of adaptation celebrates those final products in the larger context of storytelling. These elements illuminate different portions of the corpus, allowing the researcher's insights to refract in different ways, layering understanding until a robust comprehension of these websites and their authors has been built. Understanding adaptation as a form of serious leisure prompts certain aspects of the SLP's taxonomy to be reconsidered. The complex interplay of information behaviours inherent to the creation of an adaptation affirms the need for information behaviour models that include information *management* and *expression*. Using multiple approaches demonstrates the richness of liberal arts hobbies and adaptation activities as an area of study. The dedication of the websites' authors, demonstrated through the SLP, demands respect. "Serious leisure beckons the information behavior community to take leisure seriously."⁶¹

59 Stebbins, "The liberal arts hobbies: A neglected subtype of serious leisure," 175.

60 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30.

61 Hartel, "Serious Leisure," 316.

METHODOLOGY

This section will describe the research that was undertaken in order to establish the information behaviours of specific website creators, as made evident through their websites, and to establish how these websites do or do not fit the definitions of serious leisure as established by Robert A. Stebbins, and others. It will outline the underlying research questions and the scope and inclusion criteria for the selection of individual websites for study. It will then describe and justify the methodology that was used for data collection and analysis. The actual analysis of the data and the conclusions that were reached will be presented in later sections of this thesis. This research project has been designed to reflect the information accessible exclusively through the websites considered, and that can be gathered manually, in order to test the methodology's effectiveness and highlight areas where contact with the authors or the aid of computers are most needed. While this does somewhat limit the conclusions that can be drawn, this project takes care to present various opportunities for further study on these and similar websites in the future

Scope of Research

Although the research questions outlined later in this section are largely qualitative in nature and primarily examine behaviours and motivations, this methodology which eschews contact with the actual authors of these websites was chosen instead of interviews or surveys for several reasons:

1. The majority of the websites included for analysis have not been updated for some years, thus the contact information provided may well be outdated.

2. The lack of existing research on similar websites or activities makes formulating questions problematic without first conducting a thorough study of the websites themselves.
3. Most studies on serious leisure approach their subjects via contact with participants through surveys, interviews, or observation.⁶² This study intends to test the efficacy of a methodology that has zero contact with participants, looking for information solely through the output of their activities. By outlining the benefits and limitations of such a methodology, this project may help future researchers, who may not have the opportunity to contact participants, evaluate alternate methodologies.

Due to these reasons, no information beyond that which was available on each website was considered. The author's names were not searched using search engines or social media, and no external links were followed, with one notable exception: Paleothea, one of the websites selected, has a few prominent links to the author's blog where the most recent post, made November 8, 2011, detailed the reasons the author made the site and their research process. This was the only post considered from the blog, as the richness of information provided a lot of context for the website as a whole and answered many questions from the rubric in a way that was not duplicated on the site itself.

Methods of Comparable Studies

As far as the researcher is aware, no studies exist on these particular websites. Some research

⁶² This assertion will be dealt with in more detail in the Methods of Comparable Studies section.

has been done to describe and compare a variety of professional-made and amateur-made websites on other topics, such as astronomy,⁶³ but the aim of these articles is to provide a guide for users and generally do not include a section on their methods of data collection, analysis, or description. They also tend to make value judgements about the websites they are studying. This study is less interested in judging the quality of these sites, and more interested in understanding how and why they came to be what they are.

Analyzing websites tends to be a highly individual and customized endeavour, not only due to the uniqueness of research questions, but also due to the wide variety of websites on the internet, both in content and structure. A traditional method is to create a checklist of expected features and evaluate websites accordingly.⁶⁴ Though the criteria is typically customized, the evaluation is almost invariably done from the perspective of the users.⁶⁵ That is, the website is tested based on how well it fulfills the needs of its users, not the needs of its author. Prioritizing the author's perspective and needs changes what the researchers assumed to be the point of a website: instead of how well the website serves its visitors, this approach asks whether the website fulfills the author's stated goals, whatever they may be. The examination of websites from the creator's perspective, regardless of its relationship to serious leisure, is a new endeavour and the methodology for doing so is underdeveloped. The closest to an author-focused approach found during this research project was demonstrated by methods that focus on evaluating

63 Jane Duffy, "Astronomy resources on the Web: sites for the amateur and professional astronomer," *College & Research Libraries News* 62 no. 11 (December 2001): 1074-1077, 1074.

64 Sarah Vela. *Representing Classical Artefacts Online: A User-Centric Approach for an Academic Audience*, Unpublished Master's Thesis (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2014), 57.

65 Kelli Boklaschuk and Kevin Caisse, "Evaluation of Educational Web Sites," *Occasional Papers in Educational Technology: Contributions from students in the Educational Communication and Technology Program*, University of Saskatchewan, 2001, <https://etad.usask.ca/802papers/bokcaisse/bokcaisse.htm>.; Selvarajah Thuseethan, Sivapalan Achchuthan, and Sinnathamby Kuhanesan, "Usability Evaluation of Learning Management Systems in Sri Lankan Universities," *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology: Software & Data Engineering* 15, no 1 (2015): 15-25.

information and teaching digital literacy, such as the CRAAP test spoken about later in the methodology.⁶⁶ These frameworks take the time to ask questions about why the site was created, and by whom, even if it is done in order to judge the relevance of information provided to a user of that website rather than learn about the author's motivations and process.

User-focused studies tend to either have focused criteria (perhaps comprising only one or two questions) applied to a large number of websites, or an extensive list of criteria applied to a small number of websites (or perhaps only one). Lazarinis' study only inquired about the presence and type of search engine; however, that question was asked of ninety websites.⁶⁷ Other research projects may ask more questions of the websites they are studying, but often limit the total number of websites being studied, perhaps as a method of controlling scope.⁶⁸ For example, Dyson and Moran studied only seven websites, but used seven broad categories of investigation including institutional information, user information, structural context, and search mechanisms to study them.⁶⁹ Each category comprised a number of questions (ranging from two to five) that the researchers would answer for each website.⁷⁰

This type of customized, criteria-driven methodology for website evaluation focuses exclusively on the factors that are important to the study, as led by their research questions, but risks missing or allowing significant components to go undocumented.⁷¹ This thesis mitigates those shortfalls by allowing the rubric to morph and change according to the needs that were

66 Meriam Library, "Evaluating Information – Applying the CRAAP Test," *California State University*, 2010, https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf.

67 Fotis Lazarinis, "Exploring the Effectiveness of Information Searching Tools on Greek Museum Websites," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 26, no. 4 (2011): 391-408, 393-398.

68 David A. Wallace, "Museums on the World Wide Web: A Survey and Analysis of Sixteen Institutions," *Archives and Museum Informatics* 9, no. 4 (1995): 388-424.; Mary C. Dyson and Kevin Moran, "Informing the Design of Web Interfaces to Museum Collections," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 18, no. 4 (2000): 391-406.

69 Dyson and Moran, 392-393.

70 Dyson and Moran, 393-394.

71 Vela, 57.

observed throughout data collection. As questions were added or rephrased, they were retroactively applied to the websites that had already been “processed” according to the rubric, thus preventing an uneven application of the rubric across sites. It is also important to note that the process of data collection in this project was done manually, without the aid of any computer scripts, software,⁷² or tools. Dohan and Sánchez-Jankowski note that “computer assistance cannot make up for the shortcomings in the researcher's basic talent to interpret... The [real] work of [qualitative data analysis] lies in the annotation and rewriting of notes, in the conceptualization and development of a coding scheme, and in the art of proposing reasonable hypotheses.”⁷³ Due to the small sample size and the flexible nature of the rubric, it was determined that computer assistance was best left to future researchers.⁷⁴

There is a substantial amount of research on the connections between information behaviour and serious leisure activities.⁷⁵ The dominant research design involves a single hobby used as a case study, and includes qualitative methods such as ethnography, participant observation, and in-depth interviews.⁷⁶ Sometimes the researchers themselves are enthusiasts and participants in the hobby in question.⁷⁷ Research in this vein includes case studies of activities

72 Google Suite's Drive, Sheets, and Documents, as well as Scrivener and LibreOffice's Writer, were used to store data, and as a part of the writing process, but were not used to extract any information from websites.

73 Daniel Dohan and Martin Sanchez-Jankowski, “Using Computers to Analyze Ethnographic Field Data: Theoretical and Practical Considerations,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 477-98, 494.

74 As explored in *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, research can be performed with the help of distant reading and computer-aided research methods; however, that type of analysis does affect the kinds of questions one can ask from their corpus. Due to the small sample size and the desire for an in-depth exploration of these nine sites, those methods were thought best to be left for future researchers. Throughout this thesis an effort has been made to point to where these methods may prove helpful or may lead to interesting analysis in the future. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005).

75 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby.”; Hartel, Cox, and Griffin.; Booth.; Goldman and Schaller.; Robert A. Stebbins, “Leisure and Its Relationship to Library and Information Science: Bridging the Gap,” *Library Trends* 57, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 618-631.; Charlotte P. Lee, “The role of information in a community of hobbyist collectors,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60, no. 3 (Mar 2009): 621.

76 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 26.

77 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 26.

such as running,⁷⁸ stamp collecting,⁷⁹ barbershop singing,⁸⁰ and genealogy research.⁸¹ When looking at the studies of hobbies with a particular eye towards investigating the information phenomena therein, this pattern of interaction with participants is replicated. Research on dog sports,⁸² car collectors,⁸³ and mushrooming⁸⁴ all use interaction with participants as a method to gather data. Furthermore, when narrowing the literature down to liberal arts hobbies—that is, “the systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake”⁸⁵—where the whole point is for hobbyists to engage with information by both acquiring and expressing it,⁸⁶ this pattern is repeated. Perhaps as a consequence of this methodological approach, these scholarly works are more likely to deal with information activities (of the individual hobbyists and the hobbyist community as a whole) rather than “information resources, systems, structures or spaces.”⁸⁷

The corpora selected for study made it difficult to contact participants. The fact that many of these websites were created in the 1990s and persisted for an average of eleven and a half years also made participant observation impossible. Due to these factors most studies that intersect information behaviour and serious leisure were not helpful in designing a methodology.

78 Gad Yair, “The commitments to long distance running and levels of activity: personal or structural,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 22 (1990): 213-227.

79 Steven M. Gelber, “Free market metaphor: The Historical dynamics of stamp collecting,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 4 (1992): 742-769.

80 Robert A. Stebbins, *The barbershop singer: Inside the social world of a musical hobby* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

81 R.D. Lambert, “Doing family history,” *Families* 35 (1996): 11-25.

82 Cheryl K. Baldwin, “Exploring the dimensions of serious leisure: ‘Love me - Love my dog!’” *Journal of Leisure Research* 31, no. 1(1999): 1-17.

83 Dale Dannefer, “Rationality and Passion in Private Experience: Modern Consciousness and the Social World of Old-Car Collectors,” *Social Problems* 27, no. 4 (1980): 392-412.; Dale Dannefer, “Neither Socialization nor Recruitment: The Avocational Careers of Old-Car Enthusiasts,” *Social Forces* 60, no. 2 (1981): 395-413.

84 Gary Alan Fine, *Morel tales: The Culture of mushrooming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998).

85 Stebbins, “The liberal arts hobbies: A neglected subtype of serious leisure,” 175.

86 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30.

87 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

Their methods focused on participant contact or observation, neither of which occur in the methodology of this thesis. In order to begin the conversation about how to study information phenomena in leisure activities without contacting participants, or participating oneself, this intends to test the efficacy of a methodology that collects data solely through the output of leisure participants' activities. By outlining the successes, failures, benefits, and limitations of such a methodology, this project may help future researchers—who may find that contacting participants is prohibitive or impossible—evaluate alternate methodologies.

Research Questions

The specific research questions that shape this research are as follows:

1. How do these websites, their content, and their creators challenge or support the theory of serious leisure and, more specifically, the leisure arts hobby expounded therein?
2. What information phenomena are evident in the creation and presentation of these websites?
3. How do broader ideas of storytelling and adaptation interact with information phenomena and the concept of leisure?
4. What can be learned about these websites and their authors' activities using a method that excludes participant interaction as well as any computer-aided data collection/analysis?

Data Collection Methods

The vast majority of data was collected, according to the rubric and alongside plentiful screenshots, between January-March 2018, with occasional revisits during the writing process.⁸⁸

The rubric, as seen in full later in this section, consisted of a number of questions which were asked of each individual website one-by-one. Answers to each question were searched for in the content and structure of each website, and were most often found on the meta-pages of each site (e.g. “about this website” or “about the author”). Answers found on each website were recorded on a completed copy of the rubric for that individual website, after which a summary document was created for the corpus as a whole. Only English language resources were considered. A total of nine websites were examined, as outlined below.

The Need for a Rubric

Studying websites can be a challenge for many reasons. Websites—digital texts—are often nonlinear, multimodal, interactive, and unbounded in time and space.⁸⁹ The authorship and authority of digital texts can be complicated or poorly conveyed, “as the democratic space of the Web encourages unvetted publication, bypassing the review and editing processes of established publishing venues, and texts and sites are formed and reformed across multiple authors/designers and over time.”⁹⁰ There is no limit to the linkages and paths that can be taken in search of

88 These revisits were mostly to confirm or explore theories and interesting anomalies that had arisen out of comparing the data that was collected to the other websites in the sample, to take a screenshot that illustrated a specific point, or to ensure the specific wording of quotes were indeed correct.

89 Bridget Dalton and C. Patrick Proctor, “The Changing Landscape of Text and Comprehension in the Age of New Literacies,” in *Handbook of Research on New Literacies*, eds. Julie Coiro, Michele Knobel, Colin Lankshear, and Donald J. Leu (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 297-324, 297.

90 Dalton and Proctor, 297-298.

information.⁹¹ Not only is it easy to get lost clicking from page to page, it can also be near-impossible to tell if every page has been read.

The size of a specific website can be ambiguous. A suitable index or sitemap might allow every page on a website to be counted; however, not all of these indexes are automatically updated. It is possible that certain pages on a website might be left off of this list entirely. This measure also fails to take into account the length or amount of content on each page. This rubric deals with this problem by taking each website at their word—if an estimate of the number of pages on the website was given, that is the number that was used. If there was no estimate but there was an index, that index was counted by hand. Understanding the size of these websites is important for the creation of a rubric because the “smallest” website utilized by this research project had approximately 38 articles on mythological figures.⁹² The largest site boasted over 1500 pages.⁹³ These numbers demonstrate the need for sampling when using a manual data collection method. Focusing on a specific article or entry about an individual figure (in this case, Medusa) from every website allows for an in-depth look at each website's version of that article, as well as productive comparisons across websites, without overloading the researcher with information or necessitating the help of computer programs for data collection and analysis.

I found it necessary to design a customized rubric to structure my approach for gathering data from each website in order to make sure I was spending similar amounts of time and effort on each, and that I was always asking the same question of each website, even if they could not always answer them. This allowed me to a) gain a general understanding of each website in a

91 Dalton and Proctor, 298.

92 Tracy Marks, “Torrey's Muses,” *Torrey's Muses*, 2006, <http://www.windweaver.com/as/index.htm>.

93 Aaron J. Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology,” *Theoi Greek Mythology*, 2017, <http://www.theoi.com/>.

similar manner to the others, and b) guide my reading of each article on Medusa. The rubric was designed to ask questions of each website that would lead to information about the creators of each site as well as the website itself. Learning about the authors, their motivations, and their processes, as well as learning about the product of their labours, enabled this project to ask deeper questions about the activity of creating a website in this context: is it a form of serious leisure, what information phenomena does that entail, and how can this be applied to broader ideas of adaptation and storytelling?

Creating a list of criteria or a specialized rubric to evaluate a certain subset of websites is well established in the literature.⁹⁴ One aim of such a rubric is to structure the gathering of information in a consistent manner that allows for cross-comparison and analysis of the data. As such, the rubric is heavily dependent on the type of websites that are being studied; one approach may not be suitable for all research initiatives. This rubric was customized for the study of single-authored websites about classical mythology and uses Medusa as a case study for the articles about and treatment of mythological figures on these websites. The rubric evolved as data was collected according to observations that were made about what information was readily available or most useful on the majority of websites, or to investigate whether an interesting data point on one website was replicated across the others. Any changes that were made were then applied to all the other websites, sometimes retroactively, to ensure consistent data gathering. The document which was created to summarize the findings across all nine websites (dealt with in more detail later in this section) provided a final check to make sure all the questions were applied evenly to each website.

94 Vela, 57.

The questions asked of the sampled websites by the customized rubric in question can be categorized as follows:

- Basic information about the website, such as its title and the name of the author.
- Information about the author, including their motivations their process of information gathering, and the ways in which they framed themselves and their websites.
- Evidence of interaction with communities and/or like-minded people.
- Copyright information, as well as the attitude of the authors when it came to others re-using their content.
- The classification and/or navigation systems of each website, as these speak to the ways in which each author chooses to present their content (and how they think that information should be organized).
- The entry on Medusa, in order to facilitate cross-comparisons and highlight which sources may have been used (as they are not always clearly cited) or prioritized.
- Images used in the Medusa entry.
- Citations/information sources of both the website as a whole and the entry on Medusa, as they give a lot of insight into the information behaviour exhibited by the authors when collecting and presenting their content.

Previous research shows that the typical method of reading a website generally consists of skimming with occasional close readings of deep pools of information, depending on the reader's purpose.⁹⁵ This style of website-reading is replicated in my rubric which first focuses on a general skim of the website as a whole to gain context and then takes a closer look at a specific grouping of information. This is partially why I chose one entry on each website (that of Medusa) to perform a close-reading which was led by the rubric (and which also evolved

95 Dalton and Proctor, 317.

throughout the data collection and analysis process to reflect the observations made while close reading the article and to provide the best set of data to be compared across all nine sites). If a reader were specifically looking for information on an individual figure in mythology, it is entirely plausible they would look over the website as a whole to give context to what they were reading, whether it was relevant, and whether it could be trusted, before proceeding to a deeper reading of an individual article on that website.

Elements of the Rubric

The rubric itself was inspired by existing information literacy tools, including the CRAAP test and the five Ws, as well as various principles of information organization, and adapted for use with the type of website studied by this project, as listed below:

The CRAAP Test⁹⁶ is a list of questions that help researchers fully consider the information they find and whether it will prove useful for their purposes. The test provides five short lists of questions that prompt the researcher to think about the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose of the information resource that is being examined. Each criterion will vary in importance depending on the researcher's context and why they need the information they seek. Although this test is used to evaluate information specific to their needs, rather than a general examination of an entire website, it did provide several (reworded) questions that made it into the rubric including "When was the information published or posted?" "Has the information been revised or updated?" "Who is the intended audience?" "What are the author's credentials or

96 Meriam Library.

organizational affiliations?” “What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?” and “Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?”

The Five Ws⁹⁷ are very simple. A researcher must ask themselves Who, What, When, Why, and Where when considering information. Like The CRAAP Test, each question is a prompt for the researcher, and may vary in importance or application. This basic block of questions inspired many of my own, and made sure I asked at least one question from each category to get a high-level understanding of each website.

Dublin Core⁹⁸, a metadata standard comprising 15 elements, is often used to describe web resources. Its elements include, among others: Title, Creator, Subject, Description, Publisher, Contributor, Date, and Rights. These elements provided a good place to start when building the rubric, especially because many of these elements are important when citing any kind of web resource, including an entire website. They were used to ensure that proper and complete information was used when citing and describing these websites.

Arrangements within (library) catalogues generally come in three basic arrangements: classified, alphabetical, and chronological.⁹⁹ These organizational systems were replicated by the sitemaps

97 Stephanie Thomas, “The 5 W's,” *Information Literacy & Research Webquest*, 2013, <https://sites.google.com/a/parkrose.k12.or.us/information-literacy-webquest/home/evaluate-your-resources/the-5-w-s>.

98 Arlene G. Taylor and Daniel N. Joudrey, *The Organization of Information, third edition* (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2009), 16.

99 Taylor and Joudrey, 49-52.

of the websites that were studied. Some listed their articles from A to Z. Others divided them into subject area so that a user could click from a broad concept to a narrower concept. Each concept would be accompanied by a list of links to related articles. These arrangements indicate how an author organized and presented the information they gathered, hinting towards their habits and information behaviours, and thus was important to record.

Systems for Categorization¹⁰⁰, also known as taxonomies, are often used by websites as a tailored navigation system. Each taxonomy is custom-created for the content on that website and the desired user experience. Studying these taxonomies can provide insight into how website creators conceptualize the information on their site and how they expect users to interact with their content, whether it be through hierarchical nestling of concepts or a faceted classification system that allows a user to apply filters. As each author may create a totally unique taxonomy, or mirror what already exists, noting their system and where particular items may fall hints at the author's thoughts on individual subjects and on their information system as a whole. For example, did they split the Olympian gods from all the minor deities in their taxonomy? And who was included in that list of Olympians? Those decisions may indicate what sources were studied or viewed as primary by the author, as the list of Olympians fluctuated by time period and author in antiquity.¹⁰¹

100 Taylor and Joudrey, 398.

101 Mark P. O. Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology, ninth edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114.

The Rubric

1.0 General Site Information

- 1.1 Title and link to websites.
- 1.2 What dates are given on the site ⇒ earliest & latest?
- 1.3 What is the author's name and/or pseudonym?
- 1.4 What is the country & city of origin for the website/author?
- 1.5 Does the website run ads?

2.0 Web Page Overview

- 2.1 How many figures of classical mythology are represented/How many articles or entries are there?
- 2.2 Website summary.

Title, Underlined

[Title] (AKA [Alternate Titles]) was created by [Author Name + (pseudonym)/AKA [pseudonym], if applicable] and based in [country name/an unknown country]. It was established in [earliest year] and [stopped being updated in [latest year]/is still being updated to the present day]. It [was/has been] active for [#] years. [The author states they created the site [reason]/The author does not state why they created the site + but [inferred reason], if applicable]. The website uses [primary information sources (e.g. primary and/or secondary, search engines. etc.)].

3.0 Meta-Pages

- 3.1 Are there “About Me” or “About this Site” pages? Link to them here.
- 3.2 Copy and paste all the text from each page, including relevant screenshots.

4.0 Author Information

- 4.1 Do they mention having any post-secondary degrees?
- 4.2 Do they mention their occupation?
- 4.3 What contact information is available on the website?
- 4.4 How does the author frame their Website?
- 4.5 How do they frame themselves?
- 4.6 What reasons do they give for the creation of their website?
- 4.7 Who is their intended audience?
- 4.8 Are any other contributors acknowledged?

5.0 Information Sourcing & Online Communities

- 5.1 Are general/site-wide references are provided? Link to them here, and copy and paste the content.
- 5.2 Are there any recommended readings provided?
- 5.3 Are there any sister-sites/external links roundups?
- 5.4 What do these sites say about each other when they link to one another?
- 5.5 Which information sources are mentioned by which websites?

6.0 Copyright & Information Sharing

- 6.1 What copyright information is given, if any?
- 6.2 Does the website give instructions on how its work may be used or reproduced?

7.0 Navigation

- 7.1 What is the main navigation system?
- 7.2 Are headings used? Describe this classification schema and list any and all headings.

7.2 Is there a sitemap or other type of index? Link to them here.

8.0 Medusa

8.1 How many clicks does it take to get to Medusa?

8.2 Where is Medusa located under the existing classification schema?

8.3 Medusa, Gorgons, Perseus, and Athena.

8.3.1 List and link to each figure's article.

8.3.2 Provide a word-count for each article.

8.4 Medusa's Article

8.4.1 Style

8.4.1.1 Are multiple versions of Medusa's story mentioned, or is a single narrative presented?

8.4.1.2 What style of writing is used (level of formality, fiction vs. non-fiction, quoting vs. paraphrasing, etc.)?

8.4.1.3 Does the entry use internal links?

8.4.1.4 Does the entry use external links?

8.4.1.5 Does the author provide commentary?

8.4.1.6 Does the author provide interpretations of the myth?

8.4.1.7 Does the author provide quotes or excerpts from previous tellings of the myth?

8.4.2 Version

8.4.2.1 How many gorgons are referenced?

8.4.2.2 Where is Medusa's dwelling located?

8.4.2.3 How are the gorgons described?

8.4.2.4 What origin story is given for Medusa?

8.4.3 Characters

8.4.3.1 Is Perseus mentioned?

8.4.3.2 Is Athena mentioned?

8.4.3.3 Are other gorgons/Medusa's sisters mentioned?

8.4.3.4 Is Poseidon mentioned?

8.4.3.5 Is Pegasus mentioned?

8.4.3.6 Is Chrysaor mentioned?

8.4.4 Medusa Citations

8.4.4.1 List all citations given in-text.

8.4.4.2 Is there a bibliography specific to Medusa's article? Copy and paste it here.

8.5 Images of Medusa/Gorgons

8.5.1 Copy and paste any images included in the article and/or the image gallery of the website.

8.5.2 List their citations (where applicable, and note where sources are not given).

Selection Criteria

In order to build a corpora for study, first the texts had to be found and selected. I knew I wanted to study websites about classical mythology, so I began by attempting to find as many websites on the subject as I could. First, I used a number of search strings, such as “(Greek OR Roman OR Classical) AND (Myth OR Mythology OR Myths)” on the search engines Google and

DuckDuckGo. Many of these websites had links to similar websites, so I performed a sort of citation pearl growing by gathering the links to all similar websites from each website's list of links or recommended sites and adding them to my list. Once I had a large list to choose from, I began removing websites in order to narrow my scope. A list of more than fifty websites was soon narrowed to nine.

First, I eliminated any websites that were no longer hosted on the web. Although I could have used tools like the Wayback Machine to study archived versions of these websites, most of the snapshots that had been saved were incomplete or riddled with broken links and missing images. It would have been nearly impossible to approach these websites in the same manner as the ones that were still available directly, therefore they were not included.

Although websites that used content management systems (such as WordPress) were kept, small pages that were hosted on a larger platform (e.g. blogs on social media platforms) were eliminated. While these may be an interesting object of study for further research, I really wanted to look at larger stand-alone projects that were fairly isolated in order to minimize the complexity of this research project.¹⁰²

Next, I eliminated any sites that had more than one author listed. I felt that this would muddy the waters, as it may be hard to tell who made which part of the website. Each contributor

¹⁰² Social media platforms, in particular, tend to have specific cultures and unspoken mores when it comes to designing one's individual space on those platforms. These would inevitably complicate the research process, as the culture of each platform would need to be factored in to the final product or blog, and thus each culture would need to be individually investigated. Kacey Keegan, "Each Social Media Platform Has Its Own Culture," *The Perfect Blend*, December 1, 2014, <http://blog.redcaffeine.com/each-social-media-platform-has-its-own-culture/>; This would also apply to websites like Wikipedia (which was eliminated due to it having more than one author) which have strict guidelines for how to structure each article and have rules in place to make it easier or harder for certain kinds of users to effect long-term change. Darren W. Logan, "Ten Simple Rules for Editing Wikipedia," *PLOS: Computational Biology*, September 20, 2010, <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1000941>.

might have had very different levels of engagement with the site or very different reasons for contributing. Plus, the dynamics of a community building a website together would likely be very different from a solo venture. Studying single-authored sites seemed like the most suitable and straightforward approach. Websites that listed more than one contributor were not eliminated as long as only a single author was responsible for content-creation; other contributors may have been responsible for web development, art, and/or proofreading. This decision also helped to control the size of my corpus, as the single-author requirement eliminated many commercial websites (mostly companions to published encyclopaedias or textbooks), websites that required a user account to access, and several community-authored websites (such as Wikipedia).

Websites that included more than just classical mythology were kept, regardless of how small the section on classical mythology was; however, each website had to have a separate entry on Medusa (or a gorgon entry that mentioned Medusa by name).

I eliminated websites that did not have an identifiable author, as I could not be sure whether it truly was a single-authored page, or created by a number of different people. This left nine single-authored websites about classical mythology that became my corpus. Though this is a small number of websites, I feel it is adequate. Other investigations into information behaviour on the internet have similarly used “judgement sampling to hand pick ideal participants across a range of internet experiences.”¹⁰³ In the study just quoted a sample size of ten websites was deemed sufficient for the type of investigation, demonstrating that there is precedent in the literature for small sample sizes when conducting in-depth, qualitative research.

103 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 5.

List of Included Websites with Short Summaries¹⁰⁴

Greek-Gods.info (G.info)

Greek-Gods.info was created by Evangelia Hatzitsinidou and was based in Greece. It was established in 2005 and stopped being updated in 2017. It was active for a total of twelve years. The author states the site was created because she is “passionate over the ancient Greek culture and would like to provide this website's visitor with a brief insight in the wonderful Greek Mythology and Religion.” The website uses a mix of primary and secondary sources, and includes pronunciation guides.

Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant (GM)

Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant (AKA Greek Mythology) was created by Michael Stewart and was based in the United States. It was established in 1996 and stopped being updated in 2005. It was active for a total of nine years. The author created this website due to “his interest and obsession with Greek mythology” and states that his “goal is to create a comprehensive on-line dictionary of all things dealing with Ancient Greece, to create an electronic resource that will be accurate and easy to use.” The website uses a mix of primary and secondary sources.

GreekGods.org (G.org)

GreekGods.org was created by Borut Simon and is based in Slovenia. It was established in 2013 and is still being updated to the present day. It has been active for a total of five years. The author does not state why they created the site. The website uses primary sources, as well as several online sources including Wikipedia.

¹⁰⁴ Each title is accompanied by an abbreviation in brackets. This is not an official abbreviation, but one invented by this project for ease of display in tables and graphs. Alternate titles provided by the website or by other websites (such as when they link to each other in their recommended sites pages) are provided as part of the summary in brackets after AKA (meaning, Also Known As).

Mythman (MM)

Mythman was created by Nick Pontikis (AKA Myth Man) and was based in Canada. It was established in 1995 and stopped being updated in 1999. It was active for a total of four years. The author does not state why they created the site; however, the homepage states “Go get that A+” implying it was made for students. The website uses a variety of sources, but stories are always retold by the author and rarely cite where the inspiration for their version came from.

Mythweb (MW)

Mythweb was created by Joel Skidmore and is based in the United States. It was established in 1993 and is still being updated to the present day. It has been active for a total of twenty-five years. The author does not state why they created the site; however, it “is guaranteed kidsafe” and has a section for teachers, implying it was meant to be used as an educational resource. The website uses primary sources that have been retold by the author.

Paleothea (Paleo)

Paleothea (AKA Women in Greek Myths) was created by Ailia Athena (a pseudonym) and based in an unknown country. It was established in 1996 and stopped being updated in 2009. It was active for a total of thirteen years. The author states they created the site as a passion project. The website uses both primary and secondary sources, amassed from search engines, books, and college classes.

Theoi Greek Mythology (Theoi)

Theoi Greek Mythology (AKA Theoi.com, AKA the Theoi Project) was created by Aaron Atsma and was based in the Netherlands and New Zealand. It was established in 2000 and stopped being updated in 2017. It was active for a total of seventeen years. The author states the site was created “to provide an online compilation of classical text and artistic references to figures of myth.” The website uses ancient primary sources, in translation, or photographed artifacts.

Timeless Myths (TiM)

Timeless Myths was created by Jimmy Joe (AKA Bladesmaster) and was based in Australia. It was established in 1997 and stopped being updated in 2006. It was active for a total of seven years. The author states that they created the site because “I wanted to publish stuffs [sic] that I was interested in.” The website uses a mix of primary and secondary sources, both purchased and borrowed from academic libraries.

Torrey’s Muses (ToM)

Torrey’s Muses (AKA Windweaver.com) was created by Tracy Marks (AKA Torrey Philemon) and was based in the United States. It was established in 1997 and stopped being updated in 2006. It was active for a total of nine years. The author states that they created the site to “index my articles and activities completed during my years as Torrey Philemon, member of Ancient Sites Online Community (which closed March 30, 2001),” although further articles have been added since. The website uses primary and secondary sources, as well as conversations had with various community members.

Data Analysis Methods

Once the rubric was filled out once for each of the nine websites, the data needed to be analyzed.

In order to begin this process, the rubric of each website was summarized and compared to the others in three ways:

1. A Summary Document: The answers to each question on the rubric from every website were summarized and compared in a single document through a combination of prose, extracted quotes, and tables that compared the quantitative or short-answer questions (e.g. the year each website was last updated, or whether the author's name is real or a pseudonym). This summary document was accompanied by a collection of memos made throughout the comparison process which became the bedrock for the arguments made in this thesis.
2. A Citation Spreadsheet: A list of the citations (one for the site-wide bibliographies and one for the individual articles on Medusa) was collated, cleaned, and organized.
3. Evidence for the Frameworks Document: The six distinctive qualities of serious leisure according to Stebbins' framework, as well as the eight information activities of the Hektor's framework (as applied to liberal arts hobbies by Hartel & Bawden) were enumerated on a third document. The customized rubric developed for this project, which allowed for flexibility and modifications throughout the data collection process, guided my discovery of evidence for this document. The goal of this document was to show how these websites qualify as serious leisure

and how their information behaviours are demonstrated through their content, as well as provide the beginnings of an outline for the first two chapters.

These summaries allowed the interconnections, similarities, and differences between the data to be systematically compared from question to question on the rubric. They created a more complete picture of the data to form in the mind, as well as on paper, so it could be safely revisited in the future. Thus, the risk of getting “lost in mountains of data and [being unable to] make sense of them” that many qualitative researchers face was mitigated.¹⁰⁵

These summaries were accompanied by a companion document which recorded the researcher's commentary, speculation, and notes, gleaned throughout the data collection, cleaning, and comparison process in the form of memos. Memos, in general terms, are reflective notes made during the research process describing the meanings derived from the data as understood by the researcher. In this instance, a more specific form of memo was used: “theoretical memos.”¹⁰⁶ “Theoretical memos are the 'theorizing write-ups' of your ideas about your codes and their relationships as they strike you while coding... with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration.”¹⁰⁷ These theoretical memos therefore technically represent both the summaries of the answers to the rubric, as well as the side notes that elaborated on earlier memos. By building on the notes on the summary document and expanding them into true memos in the memoing document, “a clearer and more elaborated conceptual or theoretical understanding of the phenomenon in question” developed.¹⁰⁸ This approach was designed to

105 Kathy C. Charmaz, “Grounded theory,” in *Contemporary field research: Perspectives and formulations*, ed. R. M. Emerson (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2001), 335-352, 347.

106 John Lofland and others, *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis, fourth edition* (Australia: Thompson Wadsworth, 2005), 209.; Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative analysis for social scientists* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 55-81.

107 Lofland and others, 210.

108 Lofland and others, 210.

balance generalizations across these sites with the individual nature of each website and author in order to illustrate how personal each website was, while acknowledging the commonalities that exist.

Noticed patterns, random observations, a need to follow up on a supposition, or semi-developed theories were enunciated in the companion document and linked to specific sections of the rubric as connections between or across multiple questions were made apparent. This was done in a separate document so that the data was still given primacy in the summary documents and not lost amongst commentary and speculation. The structure of the rubric was duplicated in the memoing document (as in the results document) to ensure each comment was attached to a certain question from the rubric. In this way the commentary was kept relevant to the research project at hand, and the data that supported each memo was easily located.

Memos were iterated upon, relating each website to each framework, and noting and developing upon interesting patterns. These memos were considered, prioritized, and reorganized throughout the research process. A structure for each chapter was developed using the tools and/or perspectives being discussed (i.e. the SLP, LIS frameworks, theories of Adaptation), built up using the Evidence for the Frameworks Document, and then filled in with observations from the memo document. Multiple drafts of each chapter were considered, revised, and developed alongside an evolving memoing document.

When placed in conversation with each other these chapters allowed the data from each framework to be considered as a whole and re-evaluated using inductive qualitative analysis. A picture of the interdisciplinary consideration of stories and the process by which they come about began to form, prompting a re-evaluation of each chapter and a framing mechanism for the thesis

as a whole. Serious leisure's liberal arts hobby describes a specific kind of self-motivated desire for information, and the desire to share that information. Information behaviour helps to describe the process by which information is collected and re-purposed by these leisure participants. Theories of adaptation bring these two elements into a broader conversation with other forms and methods of storytelling. Together, they describe a complex set of behaviours that arise out of personal interest but are ultimately community-minded endeavours, pushing back on Stebbins' conception of the liberal arts hobby as an individualistic and lonely leisure activity. These websites are a form of self-expression fraught with themes of passion, perseverance, and community. These patterns and themes became apparent across the disciplines of each chapter, forming a single cohesive whole: leisure *matters*. It matters to those telling stories on these websites, it matters to those creating and consuming adaptations, and it should likewise matter in academic settings and academic work.

Trustworthiness: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Unlike most quantitative studies, in which reproducibility is key, the type of research done for this thesis (i.e. interpretive research that is primarily qualitative in nature) relies on trustworthiness in order to demonstrate validity. Trustworthiness can be determined through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; it entails the disciplined management of possible distortions such as the bias of the researcher and their “inability to witness all relevant aspects of the phenomena in question.”¹⁰⁹

109 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 80.

“Credibility concerns the confidence one can have that results accurately express reality as experienced by the subject,”¹¹⁰ and in the case of this project can be reflected in the efforts made to verify conclusions through more than one source. Explicit quotes from multiple websites are compared to the literature from multiple disciplines as well as inferences made through close examination of the websites in question before any conclusion is confidently asserted. When an inference is made or a theory is derived (but not confirmed), an effort is made to suggest possible avenues of confirmation in future research rather than pretend it is an unquestionable fact.

“Transferability refers to the degree to which results can be generalized [and] is enhanced when a researcher thoroughly describes a context so that later investigators may make informed decisions about applying the findings.”¹¹¹ While the corpus of this project is very specific, looking only at single-authored websites about classical mythology with an entry on Medusa, an effort has been made to point out how it may be transferable to other online research and to give researchers the tools to do so.

Part of the goal of this research is to demonstrate the extent to which a methodology that avoids contact with participants or computer-aided data collection can be used to study serious leisure. Much of the research done on serious leisure requires contact with participants, which may not always be possible. By pointing out the weaknesses of the chosen methodology, where contact with authors may be necessary to confirm findings, this project can help researchers design research questions to avoid those pitfalls in the future without having to avoid an entire corpus. Richly descriptive findings and links to the literature in multiple disciplines allows for many jumping off points on similar corpora. This project also attempts to further research into

110 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 81.

111 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 81.

websites using a creator-first perspective by providing an example of a rubric custom-built for that purpose.¹¹² Although the website rubric presented in this methodology section is highly customized, it will at least provide a jumping-off point for future researchers to design their own rubrics. The tools and methods that helps inspire the rubric are all outlined in this methodology and may prove more helpful than the custom rubric itself.

The project's transferability is not without its limits, especially when it comes to findings. While it could more easily be applied to other websites made by a single liberal arts hobbyist, websites made by multiple authors, or for alternate forms of serious leisure, are cautioned against translating this project directly. Parts of the project may still be useful, but the methodology is highly customized due the specificity of this research project's corpus.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the researcher and her processes over time.¹¹³ The more consistent the work, the more dependable the results. Dependability was assured through the systematic collection of data, guided by the customized rubric and audited by the supervisory committee.¹¹⁴ Data analysis was also undertaken in a systematic fashion as the custom rubric was applied once more to gather a summary of each question from all nine sites, which was then compared and commented upon using memos, before moving on to the next section of the rubric. Multiple frameworks were also applied to the summarized findings

112 In this case, creator-first refers to the perspective that a website is interpreted through. Rather than evaluate a website through the eyes of its user (Is it easy to navigate? Does it have the information they need?), the website is evaluated through the eyes of its author (Why was it created? Does it adequately fulfill that purpose?).

113 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 82.

114 Professor Harvey Quamen acted as my supervisor for the Digital Humanities portion of this work, Professor Danielle Allard acted as my supervisor for the Library and Information Studies portion of this work, and Professor Selina Stewart acted as my first reader, but also audited my work throughout the process, focusing on the Classics portion of this work.

according to the needs of each chapter. They were also commented upon in an iterative process until they became rough drafts of the chapters.

I maintained a systematic documentation of the research project, including multiple phases of planning (preliminary literature reviews, project plans, and presentations on the subject matter) as well as multiple phases and forms of data (screenshots, excerpts, spreadsheets, memos, visualizations, rough drafts, and final drafts). All of these were forwarded to, discussed, and commented upon by the committee at each stage of the project. This approach also contributed to the confirmability of the findings: “confirmability is a measure of how well the findings are supported by the data collected.”¹¹⁵ The literature of multiple disciplines was consulted all through this process, but especially as part of developing memos into drafts.

It is important to note that trustworthiness is “best assured *over time* through a series of linked, or *concatenated*, studies of the same phenomenon,”—concatenation being a type of longitudinal research that can be undertaken by one or many scholars centred on the same or similar objects of study and which results “in the most solid and convincing validations possible of the concepts and generalizations emerging from this body of research”—and as this project represents the first inquiry into websites of this type, “[efforts at validity] will be only partially successful... and will have to wait for future explorations before the tale of validity is fully told.”¹¹⁶

115 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 82.

116 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 83.

CHAPTER 1: APPLYING THE SERIOUS LEISURE PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

While the corpus for this project was selected in part so that the websites would reflect the work of serious leisure participants, it still must be shown that these websites qualify as serious leisure in the first place. This chapter will demonstrate that the work done by the creators of these websites should be considered a leisure activity. Next, this chapter will apply Stebbins' Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP) and examine these websites and their authors according to the six distinct qualities that occur in all instances of serious leisure. Once this chapter has shown that the websites in question qualify as a serious leisure pursuit according to Stebbins' taxonomy, it will argue that these websites should be classified as a specific type of liberal arts hobby called belletristic fiction and poetry. Furthermore, they are an example of the *externalization* of knowledge gathered by liberal arts hobbyists (as in, through the course of their hobby, these participants accumulated knowledge and then decided to share that knowledge by presenting what they know on the subject to others who might be interested, in the form of a website). Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion about the underdeveloped aspects of Stebbins' taxonomy with regard to liberal arts hobbies and suggest some improvements.

Goals of this Chapter

Stebbins' SLP frames leisure, and in particular *serious* leisure, as something of import. His work demonstrates that leisure participants devote a great deal of time, energy, and love into their activities of choice, occasionally shaping their entire lives around a passion of theirs. Dismissing

these activities as frivolous dismisses a large portion of the human experience. Stebbins brings the domain of leisure to light as a part of the every-day activities of life and positions it as an area ripe for study. Therefore, the first goal of this chapter will be to establish leisure, in all its permutations, as deserving the time and respect of the academic community, and worthy of being the subject of research. Serious leisure encourages scholars to think of the core activities therein as important and worthy of study, partially because leisure participants *also* think of their activities as important and a large part of their lives. Using Stebbins' taxonomy of leisure allows scholars to make comparisons across multiple hobbies, easing the way for generalizations, the development of methodologies, and broader applications of research.

The second goal of this chapter is to establish these websites as a form of expression. Stebbins asserts that “talk appears to be the main way for liberal arts hobbyists to express their knowledge” and then posits that “perhaps other ways exist too.”¹¹⁷ Stebbins also declares that the motivations participants have that drive them to externalize their knowledge can be complicated and are understudied.¹¹⁸ This study should contribute at least some insight as to the motivations in play, establish these website as a means by which hobbyists express themselves and their knowledge, and begin to address this gap in the research.

Applying the Serious Leisure Perspective

Is this Leisure?

In order to determine whether creating these websites qualifies as a part of the SLP, it is first necessary to determine whether creating them qualifies as a leisure activity. Doing so also helps

¹¹⁷ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

¹¹⁸ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

this project to describe the generalities of these websites and their basic patterns. Leisure is defined as an “un-coerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their abilities and resources, actually do in either a satisfying or fulfilling way (or both).”¹¹⁹ This section will apply several criteria for determining whether the making of the websites in question count as a leisure activity. It will ask whether the authors lacked commercial backing, used their free-time, were un-coerced, wanted to create these websites, and were able to do so in a satisfying and/or fulfilling manner.

No Commercial Affiliations

Although commercial considerations were not taken into account when selecting websites for my corpus, restricting inclusion to websites with a single author in an effort to minimize complexity simultaneously eliminated all the commercial websites.¹²⁰ None of the nine authors of the final sample explicitly stated any commercial affiliations or motivations for making their website.

Free Time

Jimmy Joe, the creator of Timeless Myths, comes the closest to confirming that he worked on his website during his free time when he talks about what made him consider starting his webpage:

“I found that I had too much time at hand. Boredom started creeping in.”¹²¹ This does not prove

¹¹⁹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 24.

¹²⁰ There are many reasons why this might be the case, but the top reasons is likely to be that commercial websites are typically published under the name of the company, not the individual author(s). Another consideration may be that commercially-made websites also tend to be assigned to more than one person, though this has not been confirmed by any of the consulted research.

¹²¹ Jimmy Joe, "About Me," *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/about.html>.

that these websites were created during the authors' periods of free time and without any interference from their work lives; however, it is a strong indication of self-direction.

Un-Coerced Activity

Un-coerced activity is a strong indicator of leisure: even if an activity springs from a sense of obligation, as long as the activity is agreeable—that is, the participant anticipates finding fulfillment—it can be considered part of the leisure framework, such as in devotee work.¹²²

Stebbins' amendment of the SLP to merge devotee work and serious leisure under the umbrella of serious pursuits softens the burden of proof on this particular issue. Pleasant obligation, or devotee work, occurs when a person “must make a living performing their work, [but they] do this in a highly intrinsically appealing pursuit.”¹²³

The concept of devotee work is important for this research project due, in part, to the similarities between the activities of liberal arts hobbyists and academics working in disciplines related to the liberal arts. Both spend a lot of time reading, processing, and re-presenting information related to a particular topic. For scholars and liberal arts hobbyists it may not always be clear when they are obligated to perform a task, or are simply undertaking it due to their personal interest in the topic. According to Stebbins, “post-secondary students are, at bottom, serious leisure participants preparing themselves for a career in what they hope will be 'devotee work'... for reading books required as a part of a course of instruction in a program they like is fulfilling.”¹²⁴

122 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 45.

123 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 24.

124 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 5.

Stebbins allows the line between pleasant obligation and leisure to blur to the point that, in the course of his and similar research projects, pleasant obligation can be treated as essentially leisure.¹²⁵ Thus, economic factors (such as receiving a salary) do not necessarily constitute an unpleasant obligation or a coerced activity. Even so, none of the authors of the nine websites mention financial compensation or any other type of obligation (pleasant or otherwise) when discussing their motives for these websites. Timeless Myths, Jimmie Joe's website, does show a small out-of-the-way donate button and provides an explanation as to why the author requires money. He frames it as a way to continue working on his website, as a way to add new myths, and as a way to buy more books.¹²⁶ There is no mention of paying his mortgage or feeding his kids—his request is framed as a way to continue his activity rather than support his lifestyle. It is a way to support his hobby rather than to pay his salary. It is a pleasant obligation, if it is any obligation at all.

The Question of Wanting

So, with the question of free-time (as opposed to work-time) de-prioritized, the most important qualifier is whether the people involved actually *want* to make these websites, regardless of financial compensation. This is a much easier element to quantify: five of the nine websites *explicitly* acknowledge personal interest and/or passion as a motivating element, and one other implies personal interest/passion (as it is an archive of the author's activities during her time as a member of an online community formed to discuss ancient cultures, including their mythology).¹²⁷ For example, Evangelia Hatzitsinidou, states: “the reason I created this website is

¹²⁵ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 24.

¹²⁶ Jimmy Joe, “Donation,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/donate.html>.

¹²⁷ Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

because I am passionate over the ancient Greek culture and would like to provide this website's visitor with a brief insight in the wonderful Greek Mythology and Religion.”¹²⁸ It is clear that a majority of authors definitely *wanted* to perform this activity.

Was the Activity Satisfying and/or Fulfilling?

Finally, in order to be considered leisure, it matters whether the participants are actually able to use their abilities and resources to perform the activity in question in a satisfying and/or fulfilling way. Making websites has become easier in recent years with platforms like Wordpress popping up and offering to host free websites and streamline the creation process; however, creating a website can still be a bulky undertaking. Writing copy, creating content, finding appropriate images, organizing information, communicating with users, and dealing with faulty code all take a variety of skills and resources. Although this project examines single-authored websites, this is limited to a single person *creating content*.¹²⁹ Other contributors may be involved in any of the other areas listed in the table below, and indeed they were.

Table 1: Contributors to the Websites

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Image Provider	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	Y	-
Editor/Proofreader	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
Website Host	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
Web Designer/ Developer	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
Support/Advisor	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	Y	-

¹²⁸ Evangelia Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website,” Greek-Gods.info, 2017, <http://www.greek-gods.info/about.php>.

¹²⁹ This is, in part, due to the fact that this project intends to examine these sites through the lens of a liberal arts pursuit, and more specifically as a manifest expression of the knowledge gained through that pursuit. As the websites in question are about classical mythology, it is the externalization of knowledge about classical mythology which is under examination (i.e. the content of these websites) rather than, for example, the technical skills of a web developer.

The acknowledgement of contributors is important because it demonstrates how much work these websites are, and the variety of abilities and resources needed to undertake them. Content creation is a lot of work on its own, and yet many of these websites' authors also take on all the duties listed above. As for performing the activity (that of creating a website) in a satisfying and/or fulfilling way, that can be attested to by one clear fact: the length of time each website was being updated ranged from 4 to 25 years. Therefore, the shortest amount of time that an author devoted to building and maintaining their website was four years, which is an immense period of time to do something if one is not satisfied, fulfilled, or remunerated for their work.

Table 2: Years of Operation of each Website

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Earliest Yr	2013	1996	2005	1995	1993	1996	2000	1999	1997
Latest Yr	2018	2005	2017	1999	2018	2009	2017	2010	2006
Total Yrs	5	9	12	4	25	13	17	11	9

Concluding General Leisure

Luckily, the length of time each website was being updated (4 to 25 years) allows this study to move beyond the general umbrella of leisure and classify the creation of these websites as a serious leisure activity, rather than a casual or project-based leisure activity. Casual leisure is both common and passive, requiring no expertise and very little effort.¹³⁰ Project-based leisure “is a short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking.”¹³¹ The sheer dedication demonstrated by the years of effort eliminates casual

¹³⁰ Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 47.

¹³¹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 41-42.

leisure from consideration, while the protracted length of time with no clear end date or goal excludes the short-term, one-off type of activity demonstrated in project-based leisure. This leaves only serious leisure—the proper classification for these websites and their authors on the SLP taxonomy.

Serious Leisure

Now that it's clear that the creation of these websites is neither casual nor project-based, it must be established that they belong to the serious leisure branch of the SLP. Doing so would demonstrate why scholars should take the study of these websites seriously: serious leisure is a large and integral part of the lives of many people. Leisure, and serious leisure in particular, plays an important role in the lives of humans. It takes up much of our time outside of work. It provides fulfillment, opportunities for personal growth, and a way to connect with the world and humanity at large.

For this project in particular, demonstrating that the creation of these websites can be considered a form of serious leisure is a way to acknowledge the love these authors have for mythology, for their websites, and for other like-minded people. It acknowledges that these websites are deeply personal and deserve to be examined rather than evaluated. They are, by virtue of their motivations, unlike other websites or information resources. The priority of their authors is the sharing of their passion, rather than the provision of a service. This project, by framing these websites as a serious leisure activity, insists that their worth is not in the accuracy of the information they make available, nor how easily users can navigate their pages, but rather as a form of self-expression and self-actualization.

According to Robert A. Stebbins, Sociologist and architect of the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP), serious leisure is:

A systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling in nature for the participant to find a career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.¹³²

It is important to note that, in Stebbins' framework, each core activity is sensitive to context and could be classified as any of the three types of leisure.¹³³ For example, a core activity such as "painting" may be a serious activity for one practitioner who has engaged deeply in the hobby for many years, a casual activity for another practitioner who is playing with friends or children, or a project-based activity for a third practitioner who wants to complete a tutorial and finish a specific painting. Context is important: demonstrating that a participant is doing a particular activity is not enough to show that their doing of that activity should be considered serious leisure.

In order to classify something as serious leisure, Stebbins outlines six distinctive qualities that should be present:¹³⁴

1. The occasional need to persevere;
2. Finding a leisure career in the activity;
3. The application of significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, experience, or skill;
4. Eight durable benefits or outcomes;
 - Self-actualization,
 - Self-enrichment,
 - Self-expression,

¹³² Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, xii.

¹³³ Hartel, "An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby," 947.

¹³⁴ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 11-12

- Regeneration or renewal of self,
 - Feelings of accomplishment,
 - Enhancement of self-image,
 - Social interaction and belongingness, and
 - Lasting physical products of the activity
5. A strong identification with the chosen pursuit; and
 6. A unique ethos embodied in a social world.¹³⁵

(1) The Occasional Need to Persevere

Perseverance, meaning persistence in a goal-directed behaviour over time, would generally present as participants in serious leisure occasionally needing to persevere through obstacles such as fatigue, anxiety or embarrassment in order to continue their leisure activities.¹³⁶ In the specific cases of these websites this could manifest in a multitude of ways; however, without interviewing the authors, it is hard to point to specific examples of perseverance.

Most of the authors in question do not air their frustrations on their websites. Ailia Athena (on her blog post, *not* the website itself) says “I started going in new directions and decided that I no longer had the energy or inclination to keep updating the site.”¹³⁷ While this exemplifies the failure to persevere, it does imply that the author had other moments of fatigue throughout the thirteen years that she maintained her site, and was previously able to power through them. She does speak of her efforts to verify her sources and correct misinformation she published when

135 David R. Unruh, “Characteristics and types of participation in social worlds,” *Symbolic Interaction* 2 (1979): 115-30.

136 James Gould and others, “Development of the serious leisure inventory and measure,” *Journal Of Leisure Research* 40, no. 1 (2008): 47-68, 48-49.

137 Ailia Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena,” *Blogspot*, 2011, <http://paleothea.blogspot.ca/2011/11/paleotheacom-is-no-longer-made-by-ailia.html>.

she began the site at thirteen years of age, which speaks to her dedication to fixing errors rather than just letting them be.¹³⁸

Tracy Marks' website originated as an archive of her activities within an online community that closed in 2001, though “new articles and links on other subjects have been added since.”¹³⁹ This, too, suggests some aspect of perseverance (and perhaps foresight). Her interest and participation in the core activity of learning about classical mythology did not end with the closing of the community. Instead she persevered and continued to add to her knowledge and expression of that knowledge for several years after the closure.

Evangelia Hatzitsinidou uses words like “strive” when discussing how her website is a work in progress.¹⁴⁰ Borut Simon describes the rest of his website as in progress, and asks his users to “please be patient because it is a very slow and time consuming work.”¹⁴¹ Language like this speaks to the effort and perseverance that is needed to complete this type of work. Athena references energy (i.e. fatigue), and implies embarrassment (as to the mistakes she made when she was younger). Marks' actions in preserving her work before the community's forum closed may speak to some sense of anxiety. Taken together these elements clearly demonstrate the application of perseverance, which is further exemplified by the years spent updating these websites (on average, *11 and a half years!*).

(2) Leisure Career

Defined as a path taken by a leisure participant, which is shaped by turning points, special contingencies, and stages of achievement or involvement, leisure careers do not necessarily

138 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

139 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

140 Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

141 Borut Simon, “About this Website,” *GreekGods.org*, 2018, <https://www.greek-gods.org/website-elements/about-this-website.php>.

include financial remuneration for participants, but are often marked by that participant gaining skills, knowledge, and abilities, sometimes spotted with noticeable milestones, such as awards (e.g. winning a competition) or social recognition (e.g. being quoted in the newspaper as an expert) for succeeding at the core activity.¹⁴² Careers are available in all “substantial, complex roles, including those in leisure.”¹⁴³ A leisure career's essence lies in the temporal continuity of the activities with which it is associated: that one progresses from a starting point and that, as a consequence of that progression, one typically accumulates rewards and prestige.¹⁴⁴ This does not necessarily include monetary rewards or working from within an organization or institution, though it does not explicitly exclude them either.¹⁴⁵

If temporal continuity is of utmost importance, “Table 2: Years of Operation of each Website” clearly shows the protracted career of each author. As for accumulated rewards and prestige, several sites describe a growing user base. Joe and Athena, in particular, describe emails and questions they have received from users,¹⁴⁶ with Joe even specifying that he created the website, in part, to reach a large audience.¹⁴⁷ With a growing audience comes growing prestige. A more traditional definition of career is reflected in devotee work: “[the worker] must make a living performing their work, [but the work is] a highly intrinsically appealing pursuit.”¹⁴⁸ One does not have to lack a degree or refuse all payment in order to qualify as leisure. In fact, degrees (or other certificates of learning) often mark the lengthy time commitment and evolving path of a leisure participant.

142 Gould and others, 49.

143 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 26.

144 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 35.

145 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 35.

146 Jimmy Joe, “Contact,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/contact.html>.; Ailia Athena, “FAQ,” *Paleothea*, 2011, <https://www.paleothea.com/OddsandEnds.html>.

147 Joe, “About Me.”

148 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 24.

In terms of higher learning, nearly all of the authors have either a degree or a job title that falls under Classics or Computer Science (the two most important knowledge bases that might spur an expression through the creation of a website). One author is a writer, which may not be Classics or Computer Science, but does imply devotee work relating to the creation of topical content. Theoi and Mythman provide little to no information on their authors. While degrees (especially degrees in Computer Science, and not Classics, or related mythology degrees) do not necessarily speak to a career in this leisure activity, it does imply long-term interest, changing patterns related to skills, knowledge, and abilities, as well as stages of achievement. These are all considered elements of a sociological career.

Table 3: Professional and Academic Backgrounds of Sampled Authors

	Degrees	Occupation	CS/Classics related?
G.org	?	Web developer	Yes (CS)
GM	No related	Writer	No (writer)
G.info	CS & Classics	Web developer, Elementary Teacher	Yes (CS&Classics)
MM	?	?	?
MW	English	Writer, Engineer, Programmer, Game Designer	Yes (CS)
Paleo	Classics	?	Yes (Classics)
Theoi	?	?	?
TiM	IT	?	Yes (CS)
ToM	?	Web Designer, Artist, Digital tools trainer	Yes (CS)

While the personal interest and passion stated by so many authors, in combination with the average update period of 11 ½ years, should be enough to argue a career for those who lack a degree or occupation that relates to classical mythology, Ailia Athena inadvertently and succinctly traces her leisure career for those reading her “About the Author” page:

This site was born out of my personal interest in Greek myths - particularly the lesser discussed myths about women - when I was 13 years old (back in 1996) and wasn't really meant to be a definitive source for anybody... I am a recent graduate with a major in Ancient Greek Language and Literature... In addition to being an ancient Greek major as an undergrad, I am particularly interested in culture studies, gender studies, and tend to believe that everything comes down to issues of identity. That's why I'm currently in grad school to get my PhD in anthropology.¹⁴⁹

This quotation frames her leisure career as beginning at an early age, continuing through an undergraduate degree, and culminating in the desire for a Ph.D., all the while updating her website through the corresponding 13 years.¹⁵⁰

This long-term interest is reflected in serious leisure scholarship: Stebbins says that, in the west, reading careers begin in early primary school and that, by the end of secondary school, those who are serious about reading, especially in a given topic, will know where to find material, pay for it, with whom to discuss and how to fit it into their lives.¹⁵¹ Joe and Skidmore both locate primary school as the beginning of their fascination with classical mythology, though Joe mentions fifth grade and Skidmore references kindergarten.¹⁵²

(3) Significant Effort

Serious leisure activities take significant personal effort to “obtain and develop special knowledge, skills or abilities” and thus it “squares neatly with the need to persevere.”¹⁵³ As mentioned extensively in this chapter, all of these sites were multi-year efforts. Although the specifics pertaining to the gathering, synthesizing, and presentation of the information needed to

149 Ailia Athena, “About the Author,” *Paleothea*, 2011, <https://www.paleothea.com/Me.html>.

150 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

151 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 36.

152 Joe, “About Me.”

153 Gould and others, 49.

create these websites will be the subject of Chapter Two, it is important to note that most inveterate readers, which we can suppose the authors are due to the nature of chosen topics and the bibliographies they provide, are constantly searching for new material through various internet searches, trips to the library, and through recommendations by like-minded people, requiring them to utilize an extensive meta-knowledge about their topic.¹⁵⁴

Without stepping on the toes of Chapter Two, I would like to list some ways in which these authors searched for information on their topic of choice: using search engines,¹⁵⁵ buying books,¹⁵⁶ going to the library,¹⁵⁷ going to college,¹⁵⁸ conversing with others interested in the topic,¹⁵⁹ and referencing websites on the same topic.¹⁶⁰ This is to say nothing of the actual effort it takes to read these books, synthesize the material, and express newfound knowledge. Reading versions of classical mythology, especially translations of works written by ancient Greek or Roman authors, is not always straightforward; names can be complicated, as transliterations vary and epithets are common, and readers can choose from a variety of translations (or read them in the original language, if they take the time to master it first).¹⁶¹ In addition, these works are written by an ancient and foreign society; studying their culture is not necessary in order to enjoy the works they produced, but it does provide an enhanced understanding as well as a new frontier on which to learn. Just as “liberal arts culture buffs find themselves spurred on... to learn something of the local language,”¹⁶² it is possible the opposite might be true; readers may express

154 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 112.; Catherine Sheldrick Ross, “Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure,” *Information Processing and Management* 35 (1999): 783-88, 788.

155 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

156 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”; Joe, “About Me.”

157 Joe, “About Me.”

158 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

159 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

160 Simon, “About this Website.”

161 Aaron J. Atsma, “Bibliography,” *Theoi Greek Mythology*, 2017, <http://www.theoi.com/Bibliography.html>.

162 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 89.

a desire to read texts in their original language to gain a better understanding of what was written, which may lead them to learn about the culture from whence that language sprang.

(4) Durable Benefits

Stebbins has identified eight durable benefits, or broad outcomes, that are a consequence of enacting serious leisure and which often motivate the engagement of participants in a particular activity.¹⁶³ Most, if not all, should be present and identifiable consequences of pursuing serious leisure. These eight benefits are:¹⁶⁴

1. Self-actualization: developing skills, ability, or knowledge;
2. Self-enrichment: amassing a collection of cherished experiences;
3. Self-expression: expressing skills, abilities, and knowledge that had been previously developed;
4. Regeneration or renewal of self: relaxing and re-connecting with one's values and priorities, such as one might after a long day at work;
5. Feelings of accomplishment: from accomplishing a goal or hitting a milestone;
6. Enhancement of self-image: the connection of identity to leisure, and having that connecting be known to others;
7. Social interaction and belongingness: contributing to a sense of community centred around one's leisure pursuits; and
8. Lasting physical products of the activity: such as a scarf created by a serious knitter.

A majority of these benefits are made obvious or easy to infer by close reading of at least one website in the corpus. The sole exception is regeneration/renewal of self, which is particularly hard to infer without any contact with participants, and is not addressed by any of the authors on their websites.

¹⁶³ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 10.

¹⁶⁴ Gould, and others, 49.

In this case, the lasting physical product of the activity is quite obvious, as that is exactly what is being studied (i.e. the websites in question). The fact that all nine of these websites are still online and able to be viewed, even if they have not been updated in over a decade, testifies to the lasting product of the activity. These products may not be physical in the traditional sense, but the idea of physicality with relation to internet space is due for an update. As Dalton and Proctor argue, “we are faced with an urgent need to expand our understanding of print text, which is linear, static, temporally and physically bounded, often with clear purpose, authorship and authority, to reflect the characteristics of digital text, which is nonlinear, multimodal with a heavy visual orientation, interactive, unbounded in time and space, with murky conveyance of authorship and authority.”¹⁶⁵ Although they are not physical texts, these websites are no less real for being digital, and just as important and worthy of study. And on that note, the books, photos, and other sources of information used by liberal arts hobbyists to perform their core activity of gathering information may also count as lasting physical products. So, every book these authors bought while collating information to publish on their sites is also a testament to how their activities qualify as serious leisure.

Determining whether making these websites results in outcomes that reflect social interaction and belongingness, or self-enrichment, is more difficult. Multiple authors talk about interactions they have had with their website's users (mostly students, via email or other methods). This could be taken as an example of social interaction, though they do not occur face-to-face. These interactions are more top-down than the average conversation: the author is instructing novices, rather than acting peer-to-peer. This hierarchy is particularly noticeable in Joe's copyright notice page, totalling 1,123 words, where he instructs students, in detail, how to

¹⁶⁵ Dalton and Proctor, 297.

cite his website.¹⁶⁶ Athena does advise readers (she does not specify students) what name and date to give, but does not go to the effort of teaching them to build a citation from scratch.¹⁶⁷

So, belongingness is still a question. But one website that heavily implies a strong sense of belongingness, social interaction, *and* self-enrichment is Marks' Torrey's Muses. Her entire website was built to be an archive for her activities on a community forum built around sharing love for and knowledge about ancient cultures, including their mythology. She even hosts an index of chat transcripts, which includes a link to a new community forum (as the previous one closed in 2001), as well as instructions on how to register, and records of her book clubs' previous and planned future meetings.¹⁶⁸ The book clubs and forum activity speak of a deep sense of community, while her efforts to preserve the chat transcripts from these interactions imply a certain sense of attachment. I do not think it is unreasonable to infer that she regards these interactions as cherished experiences, and thus a demonstration that she experienced some kind of self-enrichment through this pursuit.

Enhancement of self-image is also a bit tricky, but Joe does state that he created this website in part because he wanted it to attain a certain level of popularity; he describes settling on classical mythology as the topic for his website after deciding against creating a fan page for his favourite fantasy authors: "I gave up on this idea because I simply knew that I couldn't compete against some of the web sites that I have seen, because of my limited skills in graphic arts and drawing."¹⁶⁹ Thus, popularity, and ensuring people would attach his name to his pursuit/project was a major consideration. The fact that Joe maintained his website for 11 years,

166 Jimmy Joe, "Copyright Notices," *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/copyright.html>.

167 Athena, "FAQ."

168 Tracy Marks, "Mythology Chat Transcripts Index," *Torrey's Muses*, 2006, <http://webwinds.www8.50megs.com/myth/mythchats.htm>.

169 Joe, "About Me."

and that he was linked to by many other websites in his circle (which will be looked at when dealing with social worlds a little later in this chapter), attest to his success in the enhancement of his self-image in this regard.

The last three benefits—self-actualization, self-expression, and accomplishment—are all made obvious through a cursory look at the websites themselves. As Joe stated, he wanted to express skills he already had (such as extensive knowledge about mythology and experience with storytelling (“I am also known by another alias – Storyteller.”)¹⁷⁰) rather than learn new skills (such as graphic arts and drawing).¹⁷¹ This is self-expression. And yet he, like the other authors, still continued to developing their research skills and deepen their knowledge. Athena traces her growing capabilities, in conjunction with running her website, in her blog post:

Over the years, I painstaking scoured AltaVista, then Google, for images and artists and the names of goddesses and ancient queens who I could tell other people about. I bought books, then added what I learned there to the site. I went to college, majored in ancient Greek language and literature, and then added what I learned there to the site.¹⁷²

As for accomplishment, while none of the authors stated anything like satisfaction, I believe it can be assumed that each author was proud of what they had done and accomplished while making these sites. Skidmore says “[I’ve] certainly had a fine time putting together this website,”¹⁷³ Joe lists the large number of books he’s read “in the space of a single year,”¹⁷⁴ and Atsma proudly proclaims the size of his website on the front page: “The site now contains more

170 Joe, “About Me.”

171 Joe, “About Me.”

172 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

173 Joel Skidmore, “Why teach the Greek myths?” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/teachers/why/why.html>.

174 Joe, “About Me.”

than 1,500 pages describing the Greek gods and other characters from mythology and 1,200 full sized pictures.”¹⁷⁵

(5) Identification with Pursuit

Serious leisure participants are often inclined to speak at length and with great enthusiasm about their chosen leisure activity, and this is especially true for liberal arts hobbyists.¹⁷⁶ Their involvement and enactment of this leisure is seen to be intrinsic to their idea of who they are, as well as how others view them.¹⁷⁷ This attachment of leisure to identity is explicitly and implicitly affirmed in many ways across these websites, including with the deceptively simple idea of a name.

In order to create citations for each website, I had to find a name under which to list them. In the early stages of this project I feared many of them would not list any name at all and that the names I could find would be internet handles, or pseudonyms. This was not the case. All the sites gave a “real name” somewhere on their website, and a further four of them mentioned at least one alias.

Table 4: Names and Pseudonyms of the Authors

	Name	Pseudonym	Preference
G.org	Borut Šimon	-	Real
GM	Michael Stewart	-	Real
G.info	Evangelia Hatzitsinidou	-	Real
MM	Nick Pontikis	Mythman	Pseudonym
MW	Joel Skidmore	-	Real

175 Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

176 Gould and others, 51.

177 Gould and others, 51.

	Name	Pseudonym	Preference
Paleo	██████*	Ailia Athena	Pseudonym
Theoi	Aaron J. Atsma	-	Real
TiM	Jimmy Joe	Bladesmaster, et al.	Real
ToM	Tracy Marks	Torrey Philemon	Real**

* Due to Athena's request to only be cited using her pseudonym, her real name will not appear anywhere in this thesis.¹⁷⁸

**Marks seems to refer to herself using each name in equal amounts, using structures like “Tracy Marks (Torrey Philemon),”¹⁷⁹ but her real name seems to take some amount of precedence (not being the name in brackets).

Two sites, Paleothea and Mythman, favoured their pseudonym. Athena hides her name away, on an out-of-the-way page, and likely, at some point, hid it further using the same colour of text and background—she tells readers to “highlight the next little bit:” which implies highlighting the spot with your cursor will reveal hidden text (as of writing this thesis, the text on the site is black-on-white).¹⁸⁰ She also goes out of her way to ask users to cite her website using her pseudonym rather than her legal name: “My real name, that is, the one I use in my 'real life' (heh) is not Ailia Athena... If you are citing me, Ailia Athena is my *nomme de plume* [sic] (like Mark Twain instead of Samuel Langhorn Clemmens [sic]) and thus all you need to know.”¹⁸¹ Reportedly, she made up the pseudonym in 1996, when she was thirteen years old, “because [her] mom was scared about [her] putting [her] real name online.”¹⁸² Thirteen years later, no longer beholden to the wishes of her mom and how she should comport herself on the internet, perhaps closer to the age of social media where posting your real name is no-big-deal, she does

178 Athena, “About the Author.”

179 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

180 Athena, “About the Author.”

181 Athena, “About the Author.”

182 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

post her real name—still somewhat hidden— on her about the author page, claiming more direct ownership over her writing.

Athena also explicitly mentions the concept of identity in her “about the author” page multiple times. She uses somewhat academic language, speaking of the need to “locate” herself, “since the site has become something that other people are citing.”¹⁸³ This is not surprising, as the two “big points of [her] identity”¹⁸⁴ that she lists are that she is “a recent graduate with a major in Ancient Greek Language and Literature, [and] a feminist.”¹⁸⁵ Neither is surprising, nor irrelevant, as her website was born out of the desire to share her “personal interest in Greek myths - particularly the lesser discussed myths about women.”¹⁸⁶ This website is clearly strongly associated with her identity, if only as an expression of it—but that is exactly what one would expect when studying an expression of a liberal arts pursuit! Athena demonstrates a deep connection to the subject matter. It could be argued that these are two cherrypicked facets of her identity, due to their relevance... but identities are many-faceted things that are ever-evolving. Athena's interest in classical mythology began at thirteen and evolved into multiple post-secondary degrees and a website that lasted thirteen years, both of which point to how deeply rooted this pursuit is to her sense of identity—to say nothing of her reluctance to give up her pseudonym that is also rooted in Greek mythology and strongly tied to her passion project: “the [pseudonym] is the only connection this site has to its beginnings.”¹⁸⁷

Athena is not alone amongst these authors. Marks seems to be quite deliberate about how and when to use her real name versus her pseudonym. Her website, Torrey's Muses, is titled

183 Athena, “About the Author.”

184 Athena, “About the Author.”

185 Athena, “About the Author.”

186 Athena, “About the Author.”

187 Athena, “About the Author.”

using her pseudonym. This is no surprise, as it arose out of the desire to archive her activities on a forum where she used the handle “Torrey Philemon.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, when she refers to her time on the forum she uses the name Torrey Philemon, though she often makes it obvious that it's an alias, e.g. “during my years as Torrey Philemon, member of Ancient Sites Online Community.”¹⁸⁹ She often places her names side by side, with the pseudonym in brackets.¹⁹⁰ One of the few places she solely refers to herself as Torrey Philemon is on her chat transcripts index;¹⁹¹ this might be because readers will only see the name Torrey Philemon on the transcripts, whereas elsewhere on the site Tracy Marks might be a more appropriate name. She does use her real name when referring to “Greek Mythology Articles by Tracy Marks,”¹⁹² so it is clear that she does not splinter her selves into one identity that enjoys talking about classical mythology (on an online community), and one identity that does not. Pseudonymity can be a way to compartmentalize identities, and therefore audiences, especially on the internet.¹⁹³ While that is happening to a certain extent, as Marks refers to her actions on a forum under the name used in that location, placing her two names side by side, with one in brackets, serves to show they are two facets of what is, in the end, one person (and places the dominant facet outside the othering nature of brackets). The name may refer to a compartment, but she makes it very clear it belongs to her (real) self.

Athena maintains a nostalgic connection to her early pseudonym and Marks uses her pseudonym to identify a particular location of activity, and both only list one pseudonym and use

188 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

189 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

190 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

191 Marks, “Mythology Chat Transcripts Index.”

192 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

193 Emily van der Nagel, “From usernames to profiles: the development of pseudonymity in Internet communication,” *Digital Technology, Culture and Society* 1, no. 4 (2017): 312-331.

it consistently. What about someone who uses many nicknames, nearly interchangeably? Jimmy Joe has a memorable opener to his “About Me” page:

G'day, Mate! I'm Bladesmaster. Okay, okay. Well, my real name is Jimmy Joe. Yes, it is really my name, but people don't believe me. It is not an exciting name, is it? Anyway, Bladesmaster is my alias. Bladesmaster is more of [a] title rather than a real name that I found from a fantasy novel, that I once read. This is the name I am frequently known by, particularly when I'm surfing the Web. It is also a name that I frequently used when [on] on-line services such as e-mail and so forth. I am also known by another alias – Storyteller. This is because I have a very small personal website called the Book of Heroes, which was formerly called the World of the Storyteller.¹⁹⁴

This introduces two pseudonyms: Bladesmaster and Storyteller. Bladesmaster seems to be the more important alias; however, on his contact page, Joe lists a number of aliases one after another: “You may call me by name, Jimmy. Or use anyone of the alias that I have used over the year: Storyteller (my personal favourite), Bard, Mythographer, Myth Researcher, Gnostic, and I was once known as Bladesmaster, because of my old email account.”¹⁹⁵ This quote—besides adding Bard, Mythographer, Myth Researcher, and Gnostic to his list of aliases—indicates a preference for Storyteller, and de-prioritizes Bladesmaster by limiting it to one email account (much in the way Storyteller was limited to one website). Remember, these websites were made and updated over a number of years, so it is possible one nickname fell out of fashion as a new one arose—identities do evolve, after all. Joe does express a “favourite,” indicating some level of emotional attachment, but unlike Athena does not seem to express much nostalgia for his old pseudonyms. Like Marks, he seems to use his pseudonyms to compartmentalize his internet life: this alias is attached to this email account, that one to that website, and so on.

194 Joe, “About Me.”

195 Joe, “Contact.”

Several of his pseudonyms hint at a central theme—that of interest in stories, and myths in particular, thus expressing how integral and serious his pursuit of knowledge in the area of mythology is. So even though he uses more names, they are joined by a shared interest, one central to the man as a whole. Perhaps this is why he lists them all on his website—he may view it as a hub of his identity, a central nest from which all other names extend, like spokes on a wheel. Of course, this is largely speculation as the methodology of this project does not allow for an extended conversation with these authors about their identities, interests, and aliases. Nor is this project a diatribe on identity on the internet, so we shall move on to the final quality of serious leisure.

(6) Unique Ethos

According to Stebbins, “An ethos is the spirit of the community of serious leisure participants, as manifested in shared attitudes, practices, values, beliefs, goals, and so on.”¹⁹⁶ Stebbins ties his concept of a unique ethos, perhaps erroneously, to Unruh's concept of a social world: “a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous in character.”¹⁹⁷ Stebbins states that the “ethos of the serious pursuits... is composed substantially of the social world that grows up around those activities.”¹⁹⁸ In fact, Stebbins ties these two concepts (that of a unique ethos and that of social worlds) so closely together that he does not bother to elaborate at all on his definition of a unique ethos, nor give any examples of how it might apply to serious leisure as a free-standing concept. Although later in this section we will take that at face value and look at

196 Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 12.

197 David R. Unruh, “The nature of social worlds,” *Pacific Sociological Review* 23 (1980): 271-296, 277.

198 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110.

the social worlds of these websites in more depth, first it is necessary, independently of Stebbins, to establish what an ethos actually is.

Aristotle wrote about *ethos*, meaning “character” in Greek, in his work *Rhetoric*, where he placed it alongside *logos* and *pathos* as one of the three modes of persuasion.¹⁹⁹ *Ethos*, for Aristotle, represented the “character” of the speaker (while *logos* spoke to the integrity of the argument, and *pathos* aroused the emotion of the audience).²⁰⁰ A speaker's *ethos* is composed of three elements: their moral character (or ability to project a certain upstanding image), their good sense (by adhering to sound reasoning and providing relevant examples), and their good will (that is, having the audiences' best interests in mind rather than being suspicious or attempting to deceive them).²⁰¹ All three of these elements inspire trust in the audience and promote their willingness to believe what the speaker is saying. For modern scholars, ethos is used to describe the disposition, beliefs, and values of a specific person or culture.²⁰² This is the definition reflected by Stebbins when defining his concept of a unique ethos as a distinct quality of serious leisure: “the spirit of the community... as manifested in shared attitudes, practices, values, beliefs, goals, and so on.”²⁰³ Yet, by substituting the concept of social worlds for the one of ethos in his actual analysis, Stebbins does not focus on the values of an individual (or group), but rather on the ways in which a community exists and interacts around a particular sphere of interest, revealing a dissonance between the two concepts. They are not synonyms, though Stebbins may use one (a social world) as evidence for the other (a shared set of values).

199 Craig R. Smith, “Ethos Dwells Pervasively: A Hermeneutic Reading of Aristotle on Credibility,” in *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, ed. Michael J. Hyde. Columbia (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

200 Smith, C., 2.

201 Smith, C., 2.

202 Wikipedia Contributors, “Ethos,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ethos&oldid=871521250>.

203 Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 12.

Applying the idea of a unique ethos, separate from social worlds, to these websites reveals an interesting contradiction. While not all of the websites are riddled with typos and minor grammatical errors, many of them have at least a few (as seen in the quotes employed earlier in this chapter). Joe, in particular, makes many errors. Though at first glance this might put these websites at odds with the ethos of the academic community (who tend to value grammar, peer-reviews, and edited texts), Joe happens to be the one whose website cites the most site-wide sources (see “Figure 3: Source Types in Site-Wide Bibliographies”), and uses the highest number of multiple translations of the same source (see “Table 20: Number of Multiple Translations Cited by a Single Website,”). In this way, Joe is potentially the most rigorous researcher, though his writing style may lack a certain polish. He clearly values thorough and detailed study of his material, but is less preoccupied with grammatical errors in his presentation of the information he found. His unique ethos shares the former value with the academic community, while being in strict opposition to them in the second.

If we choose to proceed with Stebbins' convergence of the meanings of unique ethos and social worlds, there is actually a lot of useful information to glean. Social worlds are of particular interest when looking at serious pursuits through the lens of LIS, as “all hobby-related social worlds are information rich.”²⁰⁴ Stebbins warns that “the liberal arts hobbies are for the most part individualistic undertakings... social worlds in these hobbies tend to be comparatively minimal,”²⁰⁵ which might have made it a challenge to evaluate the social worlds of these websites without talking to participants; however, Hartel neatly counters this assertion by adding the internet into the equation: “writing early in the internet era, Stebbins probably underestimated

204 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 952.

205 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 94.

the sociality of every liberal arts hobby...vibrant social worlds centered on all liberal arts topics have since been rendered visible in flourishing online communities and information sharing hubs such as Wikipedia.”²⁰⁶

The internet is the perfect place for these spheres of interest to coalesce into discernible social worlds. It is perfectly amorphous, at times diffuse, and can support a decentralized membership that lacks authority structures.²⁰⁷ The ability for participants to freely enter and depart their social world is key.²⁰⁸ Forums and internet communities, such as the one that Marks participated in until its closure demonstrates that a social world (or many, interconnected social worlds) predicated on interest in classical mythology exist on the internet. And if “a social world must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices,”²⁰⁹ then surely Marks' call to action (asking new members to join a replacement forum), instructions on the mores of the new site (including recommending new members practice chatting in the “practice area”), references to online events, planned book club meetings, and list of “core group members” demonstrate exactly that.²¹⁰

Each of these websites can be considered a hub, providing interested readers with recommendations and links to similar sources of information or communities where participants can discuss their interests. Joe includes a list of related forums for interested parties to join and participate in on his contact page.²¹¹ And he's not alone.

206 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 952-953.

207 Unruh, “The nature of social worlds,” 277.

208 Unruh, “Characteristics and types of participation in social worlds.”

209 Unruh, “The nature of social worlds,” 277.

210 Marks, “Mythology Chat Transcripts Index.”

211 Joe, “Contact.”

Table 5: The Presence of Recommended Readings and Sister-Sites

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Recommended Readings	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sister-Sites	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Nearly every one of these websites encourages users to discover other websites, including forums, museum websites, blogs (including those of academics in the field), resources for kids, newsgroups, websites that host free e-books of classical texts, and more! If communication does not have to happen face-to-face, and is “commonly mediated by newsletters, posted notices, phone messages, mass mailings, radio and tv announcements,”²¹² surely these websites can also provide and mediate communication about topics of interest, related events, and on-going conversations.

Communication lines are opened, as not a single one of the authors of these websites fail to provide at least one avenue with which to contact them. The majority give an email address, though others choose to moderate communication through a form submitted online. Social media is not off the board, either, although many sites were started before social media became widespread.

Table 6: Mediums of Contacting the Authors

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Email	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Online Form	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Social Media	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N

²¹² Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 30.

Furthermore, these sites are linked to each other, ensuring that their social worlds connect and giving readers paths to follow from one hub to another. As Hartel specifically points to Wikipedia (Wiki) as an information sharing hub,²¹³ it is included alongside the websites in my corpus.²¹⁴ I have also included Perseus, aka the Perseus Digital Library (Pers), as it holds one of the most robust collections of translated works from ancient Greece and Rome, and was frequently recommended by various authors. It does not cite other online sources, so it was not necessary to skim the whole website for external links to one of the other websites under consideration.

Table 7: Websites Linking to Each Other

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM	Wiki	Pers
G.org	N/A						Y			Y	
GM		N/A									
G.info			N/A							Y	
MM				N/A							
MW					N/A						Y
Paleo						N/A	Y				Y
Theoi				Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y			
TiM							Y	N/A			Y
ToM					Y				N/A		Y
Wiki							Y			N/A	
Pers											N/A

* Note: Each row represents a website. A column is marked with Y if that website is cited at some point.

²¹³ Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 952-953.

²¹⁴ For simplification, “Wikipedia” is represented solely by its pages on Medusa, Perseus, and Gorgons. This is to limit complexity, as no computers were involved in data collection. Furthermore, having an article that mentioned Medusa and/or Gorgons was a selection criteria for my corpus.

While, on the whole, there does not seem to be that much interaction, it must be remembered that the original list of possible websites this project considered numbered over 50. There are *lots* of websites on classical mythology to link to, so even this much interaction is somewhat of a surprise. Theoi and Perseus see the most action, yet as Theoi strengthens those ties by linking to just as many sites that link to it, Perseus provides no reciprocation. Wikipedia, launched in 2001, is also mentioned by a few newer sites (GreekGods.org was founded in 2013, and Greek-Gods.info was founded in 2005) but only cites Theoi in its references. This is not surprising, as Theoi is considered an academic resource by those in the field, whereas the other websites are not.

Another consideration of social worlds is the context in which participants participate. Just like the Serious Leisure Perspective, which depends on context to locate what is, ostensibly, the same activity on different places in the taxonomy, participants in a social world will be involved to differing levels and for differing amounts of time. Unruh sets out four types of participants: strangers, tourists, regulars, and insiders.²¹⁵ Examining these websites and considering who is involved with all stages of their creation and use—these four types of participants—helps extend our analysis beyond the singular authors and their leisure pursuits, and helps frame their activities in the broader context of the communities they inhabit.

Stebbins helpfully sets out how each of these four types of participants are involved in the social world of committed reading:²¹⁶

First, strangers are those involved in the business side of reading; they participate little in the leisure activity in question, but make it possible in the first place.²¹⁷ Stebbins suggests a list

215 Unruh, “Characteristics and types of participation in social worlds.”; Unruh, “The nature of social worlds.”

216 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110-13.

217 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110.

of strangers for the liberal arts pursuits, including “publishers, distributors, libraries, websites, book fairs, software developers, and the like.”²¹⁸ Note that websites (and therefore, presumably, their creators) are on that list! This definition would cover the contributors we highlighted earlier in this chapter: the people who helped make these websites but did not create the content (and therefore participated little in the gathering, synthesizing, and presentation of information).

Second, tourists are temporary; “they have come on the scene momentarily for entertainment, diversion, or profit.”²¹⁹ Stebbins questions whether “it is possible for something as private as reading to attract temporary participants interested in playing the role of tourist,”²²⁰ but I believe these sites go a long way to show that it *is* possible. When looking for answers as to what the authors of these sites said about their intended audience, in large part the answer was those who had general interest in the subject area. Of course, this could be referring to other serious leisure participants (who tend to be identified as one of the two remaining categories of participants in the social world), but it could just as easily refer to others who have a passing interest or a short-term project that these websites might fulfill. Classical mythology is very present in the west, referred to in commercials²²¹ and business names,²²² so it's not unlikely that someone decided to read a myth or two in their spare time.

Table 8: Audiences of Each Website

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
General Interest	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y

²¹⁸ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110.

²¹⁹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110.

²²⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 110.

²²¹ Bunnyra, “Skittles advert – Midas Touch,” *YouTube*, July 22, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=qp0WBIME_fM.

²²² Nick Pontikis, “Business and Group Names from Mythology,” *Mythman*, 1999, <http://greekmythologytoday.com/biz.html>.

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Students	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-
Teachers	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	Y	-
Researchers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
Parents	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-

Without the requirement to be participating in leisure, this also opens the stage for other tourists in this social world. Students, who were the second most likely to be the intended audience of these websites, may be brief visitors to this social world (and indeed, are, as Joe does talk about “the number of e-mails I have received from students, who wanted help with their homework” on his introduction page).²²³ Their parents may also qualify as tourists.

Teachers and researchers, who are also mentioned as targeted audiences by these sites, are more likely to fall under the third category: regulars. Regulars are those who routinely participate in the social world out of interest (not business reasons, as with strangers; or fleeting curiosity or obligation, as tourists).²²⁴ They do participate in the core activity (i.e. gathering knowledge through reading), and therefore tend to be serious leisure participants. This also happens to be where the majority of leisure participants tend to fall in their respective social worlds. That does not mean this is where our intrepid authors fall—for there is a fourth and final category.

“Insiders engage in the same core reading activities as the regulars, while standing out from them by showing exceptional devotion to the social world that both types share, to maintaining it and to advancing it.”²²⁵ Just as these authors voraciously devour material that

223 Jimmy Joe, “Introduction,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/introduction.html>.

224 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 111.

225 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 111.

informs them about their primary interest (i.e. classical mythology), they also relentlessly create material for others to consume. As demonstrated earlier in this section, they also promote social ties, advise others where to seek further information, and in Marks' case, actually organize community forums and events. These websites are years-long enterprises that comprise an unending amount of labour and time. They both create, and are created by, communities. Athena, in particular, mentions the desire to advance her social world as a core component in her motivation to create the website in the first place: “My particular interest, the reason I thought it was worth having a separate site, was that, at the time, there was virtually nothing with pictures alongside the stories. Personally, I think the pictures add a lot; they both aid in visualizing and realizing the stories and people and tell us a good deal about what aspects of the stories are important to people today.”²²⁶

Concluding the Six Distinctive Qualities

I have demonstrated that these websites, as a group, demonstrate all six qualities of serious leisure and should therefore be recognized as sites of serious leisure. With that established, it is time to push their classification into liberal arts pursuits. More specifically, these websites should be considered to be an expression of a belletristic liberal arts pursuit. Doing so also illuminates certain places where Stebbins' taxonomy might be under- or wrongly-developed, such as the types of liberal arts pursuits that he enumerates.

²²⁶ Athena, “About the Author.”

Narrowing to a Liberal Arts Pursuit

Now that these sites have been established as a location of serious leisure... what type of serious leisure are they, exactly? Stebbins, and others, have been steadily expanding the Serious Leisure Perspective for 40 years, adding leisure phenomena that had been overlooked by the framework before researchers had become aware of them.²²⁷ The liberal arts hobbies were added to the taxonomy as their own separate category in 1994 after “Stebbins realized that some hobbyists favored learning about a topic more so than practicing it in any other way. In these cases, the process of becoming knowledgeable was the core activity of the hobby, not a means to some other end.”²²⁸ Stebbins thus defined the liberal arts hobby as exhibiting “the systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake.”²²⁹

A liberal arts pursuit has three basic characteristics. The first two set it apart from other serious pursuits: a) the search for broad knowledge (as opposed to technical knowledge),²³⁰ and b) the search for this knowledge for its own sake.²³¹ The last characteristic, that of profundity, is consistent with other serious leisure pursuits: the core activity is more than merely entertaining.²³² In the case of liberal arts pursuits, this means that “the knowledge being acquired is complex and profound; it often takes considerable time to understand it fully and integrate it well with what the reader already knows.”²³³

Whether these websites demonstrate, on the part of their authors, a search for broad knowledge, and whether that knowledge gathering is done for its own sake, is a fairly

227 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 949.

228 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 949.

229 Stebbins, “The liberal arts hobbies: A neglected subtype of serious leisure,” 175.

230 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

231 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

232 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

233 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 95.

straightforward question. As dealt with in the *Is this Leisure?* section, there is little evidence for monetary compensation or forced labour for any of these authors. Six of the nine indicate, in some way, that these websites arose out of a pre-existing personal interest in the topic, and that the authors had done some previous reading in the area. So it is fairly clear that this knowledge gathering is done out of personal interest, simply because the authors wanted to learn more about the subject area. The knowledge gained also qualifies as broad knowledge. Unlike technical knowledge, broad knowledge is humanizing, as in the Humanities: it studies aspects of human life.²³⁴ In this case, the knowledge in question is the myths written by an ancient human culture. Knowing the stories, including their presence in the modern west (many thousands of years later), tells us a great deal about humans and human life, both ancient and modern, and should surely qualify as humanizing knowledge.

Motivations for and Expressions of Liberal Arts Pursuits

“Even though liberal arts knowledge is valued for its own sake, for its inherent fascination and enjoyment, hobbyists in the area may also want to externalize it in some way.”²³⁵ The “main way” for liberal arts hobbyists to externalize their knowledge and express their passion is to talk about it.²³⁶ This talk can take many forms, such as in light conversation, heated debates, or public lectures. It can also occur online, not just face-to-face, as the line between the virtual and the real becomes more blurred and people compartmentalize their virtual lives less and less.

The identified motivations for engaging in talk include the perceived prestige of having such knowledge (and the ability to show it off through talk), that the knowledge may be of

²³⁴ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

²³⁵ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

²³⁶ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

interest to others, and that talking about it might simply make conversation.²³⁷ Furthermore, “it is clear that two processes are at work in the expression of knowledge. One, by externalizing their knowledge... [they] help themselves retain what they have learned. Two, in the course of externalizing the knowledge, they may discover new relationships and meanings in material they already know.”²³⁸ In this way, the expression of knowledge is also a manner in which new knowledge is created: expressions not only arrive as a consequence of the core activity of knowledge acquisition, but are also an instance of that core activity in themselves. The association that Stebbins makes between these processes and the observations of high school teachers/university professors who see them at work during their interactions with students may be somewhat reflected in the interactions these authors have had with students using their sites.²³⁹ Stebbins acknowledges that expressions and/or externalizations of knowledge are understudied in general, and that work should be undertaken to interrogate, in particular, the complicated motivations behind the expression of these pursuits.²⁴⁰ This project pushes for a new frontier of expression of liberal arts hobbyists: the creation of a personal website. It also posits that the motivations behind these pursuits may be less complicated than initially predicted: a passion for the topic and a desire to engage with like-minded people.

Table 9: Given Motivations for the Creation of these Websites

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Personal Interest	Y	Y			Y	Y		Y	~
Information Resource		~					~		
Educational Resource		Y		~	~				

237 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

238 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

239 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

240 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Archive									Y

Note: a tilde (~) refers to a strongly implied motivator, though it is never explicitly stated by the author.

As previously mentioned, Marks states that her site was created to archive materials (such as chat transcripts and essays) created during her time spent in an online community centred around interests in ancient cultures generally, and their mythologies specifically, though “new articles and links on other subjects have been added since.”²⁴¹ The stated motivation is a preservation project; however, by hosting them on a publicly accessible platform such as the internet, Marks is demonstrating an awareness of the community that surrounds her, implicitly encouraging engagement from her websites's users. Like all the other websites, Marks provides at least one method of contact (specifically, her email address). By expressing her interest in and insights about the topic of classical mythology, through her articles, chat transcripts, and communication with her online communities and websites' users, Marks is not only externalizing her knowledge but also, through the process of information sharing, creating new knowledge. She was doing so before the creation of her website, and continued to add new materials since, demonstrating her personal interest in the subject (or else she never would have created these materials at all).

Some authors are completely silent on the subject of motivation; these include Simon, Pontikis, and Atsma. Pontikis does, at one point, acknowledge the desire to help with the research of his users, and that he expanded his site for that reason, but it is not clearly a driving force or original motivation for the creation of his website.²⁴² The users are presumed to be

²⁴¹ Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

²⁴² Nick Pontikis, “Greek Mythology Today,” *Mythman*, 1999, <http://greekmythologytoday.com/>.

young students due to the language used on his site (“Go get that A+!”²⁴³ “WELCOME TO MYTH MAN'S AWARD-WINNING GREEK MYTHOLOGY HOMEWORK HELP SITE,”²⁴⁴ “Hey, it's past 7AM! Shouldn't you be getting ready for school?”²⁴⁵), but while they may have been the intended audience for the site, they may not have been a motivating factor. Creating an educational resource is a slightly stronger motivator for Mythweb, which states “our tools are intended to be fun for students and compelling for teachers,”²⁴⁶ although it could be argued that these tools are an off-shoot of the central website, and therefore not an original motivator.

One website specifically warns against using their site as an information resource (or, at the very least, an authoritative informational website). Athena says that her website “wasn't really meant to be a definitive source for anybody.”²⁴⁷ Both Hatzitsinidou and Skidmore acknowledge their site is nowhere near comprehensive.²⁴⁸ Stewart and Atmsa acknowledge that creating a comprehensive resource is a goal of their project, if not a motivation.²⁴⁹ These are separate from educational resources, as they are not tied to formal lessons or student/teacher constructs, but rather more generally targeted—Stewart: “my goal is to create a comprehensive on-line dictionary of all things dealing with Ancient Greece, to create an electronic resource that will be accurate and easy to use,”²⁵⁰ and Atsma: “the aim of the project is to provide a comprehensive, free reference guide to the gods (theoi), spirits (daimones), fabulous creatures (theres) and heroes of ancient Greek mythology and religion.”²⁵¹

243 Nick Pontikis, “Mythman,” *Mythman*, 1999, <http://mythman.com/>.

244 Pontikis, “Mythman.”

245 Pontikis, “Mythman.”

246 Joel Skidmore, “Teachers,” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/teachers/index.html>.

247 Athena, “About the Author.”

248 Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”; Joel Skidmore, “Mythweb,” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/>.

249 Michael Stewart, “People, Places, & Things.” *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*. 2005. <http://messengercommresearch.com/myths/ppt/index.html>.

250 Stewart, “People, Places, & Things.”

251 Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

Personal interest and/or passion is the oft-cited motivation. That is, the same thing that drove them to learn about their areas of interest was what motivated them to talk about it/create a website. This may seem like an overly simple motivation to explain such extensive projects, but it is definitely a strong motivator, and simple does not necessarily mean wrong or under-thought. Quotes taken from these sites that support passion as the main motivator include Skidmore's statement that: "the wonderful fact is that the myths are fun. We've certainly had a fine time putting together this website,"²⁵² and Stewart's statement: "[my] interest and obsession with Greek mythology began over a decade ago and has blossomed into the web site you see before you."²⁵³ This theme is reinforced multiple times by Joe, who stated that "I've been working on this web page on my own and purely out of personal interests,"²⁵⁴ and that: "I want to publish my own web pages... I wanted to publish stuff that I was interested in."²⁵⁵ It is clear that these websites represent an expression and externalization of the knowledge gained by these authors throughout their practice, thus providing an example of those possible "other ways" (besides talk) in the gap acknowledge by Stebbins.²⁵⁶

Typing these Websites According to the Ten Fields of Liberal Arts Pursuits

Showing that these websites belong to a type of liberal arts hobby is not the final step in placing them on the SLP taxonomy, as there are many types of liberal arts pursuits. Stebbins lists ten although he acknowledges that number may change as more research is performed.²⁵⁷ The ten

252 Skidmore, "Why teach the Greek myths?"

253 Michael Stewart, "About this Site," *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*, 2005, <http://messagenetcommresearch.com/myths/about/index.html>.

254 Joe, "Introduction."

255 Joe, "About Me."

256 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

257 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 86.

types are as follows: art, sport, cuisine, language, culture, history, science, philosophy, politics, and literature (AKA, belletristic fiction and poetry).²⁵⁸ This is somewhat puzzling, as this is the first time Stebbins has defined his taxonomy by *topic* rather than *process*. Even the amateur branch of serious leisure has subdivisions based on process, though they may at first glance seem like topics: art, science, and sport in particular;²⁵⁹ however, each clearly marks a process of engagement: amateur artists create fine art, amateur scientists use the scientific method to test hypotheses, amateur athletes play sports.

This is different from the types of liberal arts hobbies which might imply process but do not divide based on that notion alone. For example, liberal arts hobbyists of sport might collect information on their favourite game without ever playing it, but they might also collect this information by physically attending games... potentially by travelling to different cities or countries to watch different teams or attend large tournaments. This intersects with the liberal arts hobbyists who focus on culture, history, or language, and are also likely to travel to various places as a part of their method.

Furthermore, different approaches to the same topic are not dealt with at all. Liberal arts hobbyists might pursue a certain topic in an effort to gather quantitative trivia knowledge, like record holders and rule changes in various sports, or which scientists invented what when. This is very different from those who are more interested in qualitative knowledge of individual figures, such as biographical knowledge of individual athletes or scientists, without knowing or caring how accomplished they were in comparison to their peers or how they fit into wider trends in their sport or discipline.

²⁵⁸ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

²⁵⁹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 26.

Finally, as you will see in the next few paragraphs, finding a location for these websites (though they clearly fall under liberal arts hobbies in the SLP taxonomy) was difficult. There is a lot of overlap between types, and divisions often seem arbitrary and blurry. This difficulty may imply a shortcoming in the types of liberal arts hobbies. Although Stebbins admits they underdeveloped, he implies that researchers should just add to the list,²⁶⁰ rather than rethink it. This would not address the difficulty in placing an interest in classical mythology on the taxonomy, as it may manifest in many ways, including an interest in ancient cultures, languages, sports, cuisine, etc. This is only solved due to the deep knowledge of the sample provided by employing a custom rubric: we know where these exact nine websites on classical mythology would fall, but not necessarily where others might end up if they happened to be more concerned with the cultures that originated these myths or the languages in which the myths were originally written.

At first glance, five of these types seem to be the most likely suspects with regards to the classification of these websites as a liberal arts hobby. That list is quickly whittled down. Art refers to things such as music, painting, sculpture, photography, theatre, and dance.²⁶¹ While many classical myths are recorded as plays, many others are poems, or prose, and creative writing does not belong in this section. There is mythological art to consider, as scenes appear on pottery or architecture that survives in the archaeological records; however, these websites pull mostly from textual sources. Many ancient writers were also philosophers. Certain texts could therefore be considered philosophical treatises, but once again the pool of genres of sources is too broad for that to encompass all expressions of classical mythology. History is also an option,

²⁶⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 86.

²⁶¹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 86.

but this is typically limited to aspects of history such as military history, technology, art, or sports (the last two qualify as types of their own under this taxonomy, further illuminating how much overlap there is between categories in this section of the taxonomy).²⁶² Abstract expressions of culture such as in myth are not a great fit.

The final two categories are the most likely places for these websites to sit. At first, culture jumps out as the most natural. Indeed, “all the liberal arts fields fall under the rubric of culture.”²⁶³ Stebbins must therefore limit this interest in culture to a specific region, which would suit classical mythology just fine, as it is often limited to the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome.²⁶⁴ Still, this type implies modern culture (as a historical culture would likely fall under the history type), and most of these websites do not go to great effort to express knowledge about Greek or Roman cultures or ancient mindsets. In fact, Theoi explicitly states that “analysis of the texts and interpretation of the stories of myth is currently beyond the scope of the project.”²⁶⁵ Although analysis and interpretation of myths do not necessarily require a knowledge of the culture to whom those myths belong (and it could be argued that they belong equally to a modern western audience, so the culture in question may not even be that of the ancients), it is not atypical for analyses to consider the context around which a story was written (such as the biographical information of the author, and the culture in the region and time period).

Besides, the final option is clearly the best fit. “Belles lettres is the realm of fine-art, high-culture fiction and verse as well as its criticism and analysis.”²⁶⁶ This definition, courtesy of Stebbins, is somewhat dated. There is much argument to be had as to what constitutes “high” art.

²⁶² Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 89.

²⁶³ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 89.

²⁶⁴ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 89.

²⁶⁵ Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

²⁶⁶ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 92.

Still, many of the primary sources read by the authors in our corpus are easily recognizable and can be considered literature: Plato, Ovid, Homer, etc. Stebbins notes that “of all the kinds of reading covered in this book, belletristic fiction and poetry is where consumers are least inclined to speed read.”²⁶⁷ The need to slowly and systematically work through the texts in question is supported by their use of foreign literary conventions, foreign names and epithets, and the plethora of translator's notes common to the best translations, all of which demand a certain amount of meticulous reading. This slow and careful reading is done for several reasons; readers want to relish the artistry of the writing, break apart the plot, and, most important for this project, readers want to “give considerable thought to the characters in the work, to the author’s description of them, their relationship with each other, their fit to the plot, and so forth.”²⁶⁸

Nearly all of these websites organize their information by writing individual articles about individual figures in myth.²⁶⁹ Timeless Myths gives two purposes for its existence: first, to retell popular myths and legends, and second, “to provide readers with sources of information on popular characters found in myths and legends.”²⁷⁰ For each article, Joe tries to describe where that character came from, whether they married (and whom they married), who their parents and children are, their achievements, their death, and more.²⁷¹ While Joe clarifies that he does not want to go “into an in-depth psychoanalysis on [the character],”²⁷² his statement still exemplifies

267 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 92.

268 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

269 This is partially a consequence of the selection criteria (as every website had to mention Medusa or Gorgons in some visible form), but is also a convention of the type of website, as well as the original myths (which are often, but not always, formed around a central character, making it “their” myth or cycle, as opposed to an ensemble piece).

270 Joe, “Introduction.”

271 Joe, “Introduction.”

272 Joe, “Introduction.”

the kind of thinking that Stebbins describes, and that is necessary for these authors to qualify as belletrists.

The only website among the nine that does not display a deep level of engagement with the material is, oddly enough, Theoi, the “academic” website. As stated earlier, analysis and interpretation falls outside of the mission statement of the website. “The Theoi Project profiles each deity and creature of Greek mythology on a separate page, incorporating an encyclopedia summary, quotations from a wide selection of ancient Greek and Roman texts, and illustrations from ancient art.”²⁷³ While this suggests that no synthesis happens, that the author only finds information and moves it around for a new audience (as when he copies and pastes the corresponding encyclopedia entry), never incorporating it into his own knowledge base, this is not entirely true. At least on the Gorgons' dedicated profile there exists two areas of written synthesis: an introduction which quickly summarizes Medusa's place in the Perseus cycle and her genealogy, as well as a short commentary section which brings together various physical descriptions and associations with other mythical figures.²⁷⁴ A fairly deep knowledge of Medusa, ancient writers, and mythological figures would be needed to make these connections and summarize them for interested readers.

As a side note: while the materials quoted on these websites might comfortably fit within the purview of belletristic fiction and poetry, other materials may not. If this type of liberal arts hobby is defined by slow, deep reading²⁷⁵ where participants give considerable thought to the work, its characters, plot, and structures,²⁷⁶ then its reach should extend beyond the reading,

273 Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

274 Aaron J. Atsma, “Gorgones & Medousa,” *Theoi Greek Mythology*, 2017, <http://www.theoi.com/>.

275 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 92.

276 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

criticism, and analysis of high-culture fiction.²⁷⁷ “Anyone who has ever fantasized about an alternate ending to a favorite book or imagined the back story of a minor character in a favorite film,”²⁷⁸ is certainly thinking deeply about the characters or plot of a story, regardless of the high- or low-brow status of those books or movies. Much of fanwork arrives from the close readings and deep knowledge of texts; you have to know the end of a story—and what events lead to it—before you can change it.²⁷⁹

Where would these kinds of activities and expressions fall under the current ten types of liberal arts hobbies? Where is the location for “low-brow” fiction taken seriously by huge swathes of fans, such as *Twilight*, which inspired E.L. James to publish her fanfiction adaptation of *Twilight: Fifty Shades of Grey*, itself a *New York Times* bestseller and source-text to an equally large number of fans.²⁸⁰ The concept of adaptation as serious leisure (and a liberal arts hobby) will be expounded upon in Chapter Three. For now, it is enough to use it as a way to cast doubt on to the section of the SLP devoted to liberal arts hobbies and their subtypes. Sports fandom exists alongside a robust collection of fanfiction. At the time of writing, the popular fanfiction website Archive of Our Own hosted 53,170 stories under the banner of “Sports RPF” (Real Person Fiction).²⁸¹ It is likely that these fans' approach to sports has more in common with belletrists than with liberal arts hobbyists in the sport subtype, though further research would need to be done before this could be confirmed. Perhaps the 10 subtypes should be re-done with an eye to method of engagement rather than topic of interest in order to better represent the different approaches to liberal arts hobbies and better match the rest of the SLP.

277 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 92.

278 Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, eds, *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 1.

279 Hellekson and Busse, 2.

280 Hellekson and Busse, 3.

281 “Fandoms,” *Archive of Our Own*, <https://archiveofourown.org/media> (accessed January 14, 2019).

The Question of Information in Fiction

Finally, although it will not be dealt with in detail until chapter three, I find it necessary to challenge an assertion that Stebbins makes about the sub-section of belletristic fiction and poetry. He states that “of all the different types of liberal arts hobbyists, the readers of belletristic novels and poetry are the least likely to find information in their material.”²⁸² He limits the need for information in belletristic pursuits to “information about where to find that material, how to join discussion groups, who to rely on for informed analyses and the like.”²⁸³ While this information is certainly needed, and while it does “[take] place outside the core activity of reading a fine novel or poem,”²⁸⁴ it reveals a somewhat limited view of what counts as information, and, in my opinion, it is a very dubious claim.

It is not as if *no* information exists in a story, or can be found in novel or poem. In fact, I believe that stories are *made* of information. This is made especially obvious when studying adaptations, where the same story is told by multiple authors and through various versions and mediums. When each of these authors wrote their article on Medusa they had to take in all kinds of contradictory information about her story as told by ancient authors, turn it around in their heads until they integrated it into understanding—transforming that information into knowledge—and then find a way to publish that synthesis on their website, sharing their understanding with the world. That contradictory information is *information*; those contradictory stories must first be reconciled in some way in the mind of these websites' authors before the story can be retold in their own words. This is the process of knowledge acquisition: the core activity of all liberal arts hobbies, including the expressions thereof. If one can perform this act on texts about sports or

282 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

283 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

284 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

cuisine, why does it suddenly become impossible to do the same with the stories in Stebbins' definition of belletristic fiction and poetry? Why does Stebbins draw the line there, excusing his arbitrariness with the fallacious claim that “readers of belletristic novels and poetry are the least likely to find information in their material”?²⁸⁵ This may be due to an unfortunate misconception that “information” must be dry or boring.

Chapter Two of this thesis deals with the types of information hobbyists might encounter or make use of outside of “the core activity of reading a fine novel or poem,”²⁸⁶ including information about where these hobbyists find their reading material.²⁸⁷ Chapter Three deals with the information that exists inside the material being read using each website's article on Medusa as a sample, refuting Stebbins' claim that belletristic materials are unlikely to contain information.²⁸⁸ This refutation is important for this study because it encourages scholars who are interested in the intersection of leisure and LIS to consider the application of LIS frameworks to aspects of leisure beyond the participants' information behaviours.

Concluding Remarks

These websites can be considered a serious pursuit under the SLP. They represent an expression of knowledge gained by the authors throughout the course of their liberal arts hobby, typified as a subset of belletristic fiction and poetry. Although Stebbins separates the core activity of knowledge acquisition in the liberal arts hobbies from their externalization—implying such expressions are a tangential and incidental offshoot—this project problematizes that division, as

²⁸⁵ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

²⁸⁶ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

²⁸⁷ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

²⁸⁸ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

the act of expressing knowledge may simultaneously lead to the discovery and acquisition of new knowledge. Stebbins himself acknowledges that teachers gain insight through the teaching of materials,²⁸⁹ so it makes sense that leisure participants might learn through the externalization of their knowledge (as might happen throughout the process of creating a website). While expressing knowledge and gaining insight about material already known to the participant is different from learning new information through reading or other methods, both can and should be considered a part of the core activity of liberal arts hobbies: the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake.

As discussed in the methodology section of this project, nearly all research into serious leisure includes at least some kind of interview, survey, or contact with the people being studied (if only due to participant observation; i.e. the researchers taking part in the activity). This research shows that it is possible to study at least some activities that fall under the SLP without contacting participants. The fact that this thesis exists, in the length and breadth that it does, should testify to the ways in which a limited methodology does not necessarily prohibit research on this type of documented expression of a liberal arts hobby. Therefore, in the cases where participants in a serious leisure activity are unable to be contacted it is not always necessary to abandon the line of inquiry altogether. And, in cases such as this, where extensive documentation exists about a serious leisure activity, whether it is an expression of that activity or not, researchers are likely to find nearly all they need to conduct a thorough study.

Identifying these websites as expressions of liberal arts hobbies encourages scholars to take them and their like as seriously as the leisure participants do. These authors spend hundreds of hours over the course of, on average, more than a decade creating their website and

²⁸⁹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

participating in their leisure activities. Stebbins' model highlights serious leisure as something intrinsic to humanity, as something that is highly valued by its participants and surrounded by a community of like-minded people. These activities, and the domain of leisure, should not be ignored or passed-over by scholars. Beyond simply acknowledging their importance to the participants, and serious leisure's place in human behaviour, placing these sites on the SLP helps enable the generalization of their conclusions across similarly placed activities. This study also provides insights into the SLP and where it might be going wrong, such as in the conflation of unique ethos and social worlds, the false division of expressions of knowledge and the core activity of knowledge acquisition in liberal arts hobbies, and the (admittedly underdeveloped) ten subsets of liberal arts hobbies.

CHAPTER 2: APPLYING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

Now that we have identified these websites as expressions of liberal arts hobbies we can relate this project more strongly to LIS subject matter—after all, if there exists “an LIS center in the domain of leisure, it is here [in the liberal arts hobbies]; the area of free time where seeking information for intrinsic reasons is the supreme goal.”²⁹⁰ Three lenses have been selected from the field of LIS for this purpose and will be put to use in this chapter to examine the corpus and further an understanding of these websites as artifacts of interest to scholars. Information Behaviour, Information Architecture, and Bibliometric approaches were chosen. Researchers interested in studying information phenomena in serious leisure often focus on information behaviour models.²⁹¹ Thus, using an information behaviour model to guide the process of data collection and analysis allows the activities occurring on these sites to be compared to the findings of other studies interested in the information behaviours of serious leisure participants.

That said, information behaviour is not the only information phenomena that can be studied in relation to these websites, or leisure at large. Other areas of leisure that might be of interest to information scholars include studying their information resources, systems, structures, or spaces.²⁹² The additions of Information Architecture and Bibliometric models allows this study to reach beyond the typical focus on information behaviours in this chapter and focus, in detail, on the information resources that are being used and the information systems that are being created by leisure participants. A bibliometrical approach studies the bibliographies of each

²⁹⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

²⁹¹ Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

²⁹² Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

website, describing trends in the information resources that were consulted and measuring the relative importance of individual authors and texts. Information architecture provides a structure for analyzing the websites themselves, highlighting the methods by which authors manage and organize the various pieces of information they have gathered. Hartel mourns information resources, systems, structures, and spaces as understudied in leisure.²⁹³ This study hopes to begin the work of filling that gap. These websites are, after all, information resources unto themselves. They contain systems, structures, and spaces ripe for examination.

Goals of this Chapter

Chapter One established that these websites can be thought of as expressions of a liberal arts pursuit, and can be analyzed using the Serious Leisure Perspective. Chapter Two intends to extend that analysis using three perspectives from Library and Information Studies: Information Behaviour, Information Architecture, and Bibliometrics. Information behaviour models, and information-seeking models in particular, are no stranger to the SLP, as “participants in serious leisure must make significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill. Hence, information and the proactive seeking and use of it are central to serious leisure.”²⁹⁴ This becomes even more pronounced in liberal arts hobbies, where reading can be considered the core activity. While Information Architecture (“the process of designing, implementing and evaluating information spaces”)²⁹⁵ is not as prevalent in serious leisure studies, it is closely (though not exclusively) tied to the creation of websites.²⁹⁶ Therefore information architecture is

293 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

294 Hartel, “The serious leisure frontier in library and information science: Hobby domains,” 230.

295 Andrew Dillon, “Information Architecture in JASIST: Just Where Did We Come From?” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 53, no. 10 (2002): 821-823, 821.

296 Taylor and Joudrey, 20.

an ideal lens to apply to this study, as it is designed around websites and, more specifically, the process by which they are created. Bibliometric methods have been used to analyze citations in academic literature in order to measure the influence of a certain scholar, journal, or piece of work.²⁹⁷ Although these websites may not exist exclusively in the academic sphere, they do often provide citations that could point to the influence of particular texts or authors in this particular liberal arts pursuit. Furthermore, the presence of citations flags the information behaviours of the authors: we know they conduct research, and can infer certain things about their research process such as which source they are consulting and how many sources they are consulting.

This chapter makes an effort to show that, even in absence of participant interaction, one can conduct studies using LIS perspectives on serious leisure activities that are documented, either as an expression of that leisure activity (as in the case of these websites), or as a by-product of that activity (such as in the hobby of cooking, where a cook may collect recipes and/or cookbooks).²⁹⁸ These three perspectives will demonstrate the many types of information phenomena that occur as part of a liberal arts hobby. In particular, this chapter will discuss the complex array of information behaviours that participants enact while recursively gathering and presenting their knowledge of classical mythology by creating an information resource of their own. Together, these three tools further the idea that permutation of serious leisure dealt with by this study is created by authors who are dedicated to their liberal arts pursuit, and that these kinds of expressions are important and worthy of further study.

²⁹⁷ Cronin, 2.

²⁹⁸ Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 11.

Information Behaviour

Choosing a Model for Information Behaviour

In order to enable comparisons with other case studies of serious leisure, it is important that this project examine similar points of interest. When looking at the information phenomena surrounding leisure activities, most researchers tend to study the information behaviours of hobbyists.²⁹⁹ Information behaviour is a broad concept that can cover many activities, including the gathering, evaluation, use, and expression of information. Simply put, information behaviour occurs when humans interact with information in some manner. In order to apply the concept of information behaviour to these websites in a sensible manner, a specific model had to be selected in order to guide the collection and analysis of data.

In the nearly 60 years since the concept was first identified, many models of information behaviour have emerged. Wilson proposed a model in 1981 where he provided “the basis for a theory of the motivation for information-seeking behavior,”³⁰⁰ in which he focused on “the recognition of needs for which a user may identify various kinds of 'information-seeking paths.’”³⁰¹ He included a space for information processing (beyond the usual behaviours of seeking and use) in his model, linking processing to learning.³⁰² These extended behaviours are of particular interest in a project that studies liberal arts hobbies, due to their core activity: that is, the acquisition of knowledge, or, simply put, learning.³⁰³ Importantly, liberal arts hobbyists also

299 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

300 Tom D. Wilson, “On User Studies and Information Needs,” *Journal of Documentation* 37, no. 1 (1981): 3–15, 3.

301 Savolainen, 113.

302 Anders Hektor, *What's the use: Internet and information behavior in everyday life* (Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University, 2001), 57.

303 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 27.

acquire knowledge *for its own sake*,³⁰⁴ so models such as Kuhlthau's³⁰⁵ or Krikelas'³⁰⁶ (and Wilson's own model) which presuppose a need for information as the starting point for information-seeking behaviours, rather than serendipitous discovery through browsing, are less useful for this project. These models must also grapple with the fact that, though a search for information might be sparked by uncertainty that coalesces into a need, observing this trigger is not possible as it is an internalized process.³⁰⁷

As weighing in on the definitions and approaches to cognitive information behaviours is not within the scope of this project, in part due to the absence of contact with the leisure participants in question, this project must select a model that focuses on observable behaviours and, as discussed previously, includes elements beyond information seeking. Information production, management, and dissemination, which are often neglected by information behaviour models,³⁰⁸ are vital aspects of consideration when looking at liberal arts hobbies and especially the expressions thereof: in order to create their websites, each authors had to not only seek information, but understand it, manage it, and then produce and disseminate it online.

For the difficult task of picking an information behaviour model this project turns to an expert: Jenna Hartel. Stebbins, the father of the SLP, cites Hartel as the pioneer of the meeting of the fields of LIS and leisure studies (particularly the SLP).³⁰⁹ She has published heavily on the intersections of the SLP and LIS; it was even the topic of her doctoral dissertation.³¹⁰ Hartel,

304 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 27.

305 Carol C. Kuhlthau, "Inside the Search Process: Information Seeking From the User's Perspective," *Journals of the American Society for Information Science* 42, no. 5(1991): 361-71, 361-62.

306 James. Krikelas, "Information-Seeking Behavior: Patterns and Concepts," *Drexel Library Quarterly* 19, no. 6 (1983): 5-20, 6.

307 Savolainen, 114.

308 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 14.

309 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 22.

310 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*.

Cox, and Griffin, in their paper titled “Information Activity in Serious Leisure,” propose that researchers should use of Hektor's model of Information Activities when investigating the information behaviours of liberal arts hobbyists.³¹¹ Hektor's model, like Wilson's, is holistic.³¹² It “subsumes the diversity of behavior displayed by ordinary people in their everyday lives as they interact with information systems,” and, unlike many other models of information behaviour, does not focus on a committed seeker of information or an expert user.³¹³ Although hobbyists are not necessarily inexperienced nor uncommitted, in the case of liberal arts hobbyists they are interested in gaining knowledge for its own sake.³¹⁴ Thus the creators of the websites in our sample are likely to be voracious readers in their sphere of interest, “expanding their knowledge through cultural tourism, documentary videos, tv programs, and similar resources.”³¹⁵ They are interested in gathering broad knowledge of the subject areas, rather than answer specific questions or fulfill particular information needs.³¹⁶

Selecting Hektor's Model of Information Activities

According to Hektor himself, his model “is an exploration of a new path in user research and it differs from other models in four ways: 1) It includes the use of any kind of information system, 2) it concerns the circumstances of everyday life, 3) it includes the presence of other people, 4) it concerns all forms of information activities, not only seeking and gathering information.”³¹⁷ First of all, these websites (information systems in their own right), beyond the citations in their

311 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin.

312 Hektor, 57.

313 Hektor, 41.

314 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 27.

315 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 27.

316 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

317 Hektor, 60.

bibliography, link to a variety of online and offline resources (digital and physical archives, museum websites, pronunciation guides, maps, academics' blogs, etc.), so a model that considers all of these sources as valid is important for this study—never mind the fact that Hektor developed it specifically for use in conjunction with the internet. Second, leisure is an aspect of everyday life that sits apart from professional or academic domains—it also happens to be understudied by LIS researchers interested in information behaviour.³¹⁸ Finding an information behaviour model that pertains to the leisure domain is particularly serendipitous. Thirdly, as examined in detail in Chapter One, social worlds and other forms of leisure communities are central to developing a full understanding of a serious leisure pursuit. Though this research occurs in an online environment that does not mean no communities or conversations exist. Marks' chat transcripts, posted on her website, demonstrates exactly that.³¹⁹ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Hektor's definition of information behaviour includes activities beyond the seeking and gathering of information, which is central to a project that examines expressions of knowledge.

His model also focuses almost exclusively on observable behaviours, rather than cognitive ones.³²⁰ This makes the application of the model more straightforward when using a methodology that does not include interacting with participants. Therefore Hektor's model was chosen for its suitability and its prior presence in serious leisure scholarship. Hartel and her

318 Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 17.

319 Marks, "Mythology Chat Transcripts Index."

320 Technically, his information activity called "Unfold," or the receiving and extracting of information, might be considered a cognitive process. While the more intricate aspects of this process are unavailable to this study (such as the integration of received information alongside the knowledge already present in a person's mind), it is accompanied by observable external actions such as reading or listening to an information source which is observable and quantifiable in the context of this study. Hektor, 84.

colleagues make an effort to connect Hektor's model to liberal arts hobbies in general. This project applied the model using their guidance.

Applying Hektor's Model

Hektor's model, depicted in “Figure 2: Hektor's Information Activities Model,” identifies eight specific information activities that people display in their interaction with information which correspond to four groups of information behaviours: seeking, gathering, communicating, and giving information.³²¹ This manifests in eight very specific information activities on the outer ring of Hektor's model: Search & Retrieve (“an active and directed effort of recovering information... involving some searchable information system”),³²² Browse (engaging with material that has a perceived probability to encounter a resource or information piece of some value, without looking for something specific), Monitor (using familiar sources and services on a recurring basis; the sources are intentional but the information gathered as a result is incidental), Unfold (extracting and/or receiving information from a source, often through reading or listening), Exchange (bidirectional act of giving and receiving information in a reciprocal manner), Dress (externalizing one's knowledge through texts, words, pictures, images, music, or a combinations of elements), Instruct (making statements, imparting information, and/or making one's wishes known), and Publish (the formal announcing or posting of information in public).

This model was originally published in 2001. Hartel et al. observed that in its original iteration Hektor's framework “does not fully reflect the experiences of information superabundance and associated activities such as information filtering, blunting, or avoidance.”³²³

321 Hektor, 80-81.

322 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

323 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 15.

Their paper suggests that social media, in particular, erodes the boundaries between several of Hektor's current information activities, including exchanging, dressing, instruction, and publishing.³²⁴ The issues with the identification of information behaviours in an online context were evident in the data of this study; however, pairing a number of these information activities together allowed this study to side-step those eroded boundaries and perform meaningful analysis while still benefitting from Hektor's conceptualization of information activities.

Importantly, Hektor's model acknowledges that seeking, processing, and sharing information happens recursively and concurrently. His model takes the form of a circle, after all. Chapter One discussed how expressing knowledge can often lead to a new understanding of the material being expressed. Occasionally this might also spur a new search for information if a person realizes that their understanding of a topic is underdeveloped or incomplete. Hektor's model does not treat information behaviours as linear, from seeking to use, and therefore frees this study to do the same, reiterating the insights of Chapter One (that expressing knowledge is not separate from the core activity of gathering knowledge in liberal arts hobbies) using the language specific to LIS and research on information behaviour. This section furthers an understanding of the information behaviours that are being enacted by the authors, even if they are not identified on a granular level. It demonstrates the possibility for researchers to observe and analyze information behaviours on these websites (and possibly other documented expressions of liberal arts hobbies) even if they choose not to interact with participants.

324 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 15.

Search & Retrieve + Browse

Searching and retrieving consists of an active effort to pull targeted information from a searchable information system in order to fill an immediate need.³²⁵ In contrast, browsing consists of a more passive perusal of a resource that is perceived as likely to hold information of interest, although no specific piece of information in particular is sought, nor is an immediate need being filled.³²⁶ The following bullet points list the places where information is being sought (i.e. information sources) by the authors in our sample, and where these two types of activities may be occurring:

- Libraries (public, academic, and/or digital)
- Search engines
- Archives (for both texts and images, largely digital in nature)
- Bookstores (online and brick-and-mortar)
- Encyclopedias (digital and physical editions, including Wikipedia)

While these are locations or brokers of information, not actual information activities, certain behaviours on the part of the authors can be inferred. As discussed during the section on updating Hektor's model, it is impossible to tell in what manner the website authors interacted with these sources. Therefore searching activities cannot be isolated from browsing activities, and these will be dealt with as a matched pair.

Hartel et al. provide a lovely quote about the searching abilities of liberal arts hobbyists, which confirms many of these locations as relevant locations of this type of information activity:

Whatever their liberal arts topic may be, these hobbyists are skilled at searching library catalogues, article databases, and online search engines to acquire the books, articles, and other documents that function as primary resources for their learning. They may also

³²⁵ Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

³²⁶ Hektor, 82.

search archives and special collections for original data or photographs, using more advanced retrieval tools such as finding aids and indexes... This hobby population has higher than average skills in Boolean search techniques and the strategic use of subject terms and descriptors associated with their topic.³²⁷

While none of the website creators provides detailed search strings—booleans or no booleans—several of them do mention a variety of sources for their information including libraries, search engines, and archives, for both text and photographs. Atsma explicitly thanks “the Universities of Auckland and Leiden whose library resources were invaluable in the research of this project.”³²⁸ Joe lists several libraries from which he would try to borrow books: “from the local public library or from the library of the university or college... If they can't be found in these libraries, then the third option is to visit the State Library in my city.”³²⁹ Joe is the only author who even gets close to specifying the manner in which he approaches these information resources. Joe implies that he does not buy books randomly (which might have indicated a browsing activity), but rather searches for a specific book first online or in stores, and if that fails, local libraries³³⁰ (therefore stating an explicit preference for searching over browsing when it comes to finding books, although this does not necessarily carry over to the manner in which he uses these books—reading them cover to cover would likely be considered browsing, whereas flipping to a specific passage would be a searching activity).³³¹

Search engines are also name checked. Athena describes how her search engine of choice evolved over her thirteen years of work on her website, as the internet evolved along with her: “I painstakingly scoured AltaVista, then Google.”³³² Online bookstores are also an information

327 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

328 Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

329 Jimmy Joe, “Bibliography,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006 <http://www.timelessmyths.com/bibliography.html>.

330 Joe, “Bibliography.”

331 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

332 Athena, “Paleothea.com is no longer made by Ailia Athena.”

broker, requiring enough skill both to find a book and to determine its relevance based on its listed metadata. “[I buy books] through the internet, like Amazon, Borders, and Barnes and Noble. There are many more internet bookshops, but these are the more better known companies.”³³³ Plus, Marks cites an article from an academic journal in her entry on Medusa.³³⁴ Unfortunately it is not clear *how* she found this article, whether it was through an online search engine, database, library catalogue, or some other method. This clearly indicates one of the shortfalls of a methodology which prevents any interaction with leisure participants.

Wikipedia is occasionally cited as a source, though it is most often in reference to the authors' use of its public domain images through Wikimedia Commons.³³⁵ Online archives, museum websites, and other online resources on related topics (professional, academic, and personal!), make plentiful appearances in the “sister-sites,” “recommended reading,” and “links” sections of these websites.³³⁶ Perseus Digital Library is referenced by the most websites in the corpus (five of nine), illustrating its importance, influence, and usefulness to these hobbyists. While all of these sources are being searched and/or browsed, many (if not all) of these authors were also busy creating their own collections, both online and off, and made up of all kinds of materials related to classical mythology. Hatzitsinidou references a “personal collection”³³⁷ when discussing which images are used on her site, and Joe refers to “my own personal library.”³³⁸

333 Joe, “Bibliography.”

334 Tracy Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology,” *Torrey's Muses*, 2006, <http://www.webwinds.com/thalassa/medusa.htm>.

335 Simon, “About this Website.”; Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

336 Aaron J. Atsma, “Website Links,” *Theoi Greek Mythology*, 2017, <http://www.theoi.com/Links.html>.; Michael Stewart, “Links,” *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*, 2005, <http://messagenetcommresearch.com/myths/links/index.html>.; Jimmy Joe, “Related Sites,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/links.html>.; Ailia Athena, “References and Links,” *Paleothea*, 2008, <https://www.paleothea.com/References.html>.

337 Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

338 Joe, “Bibliography.”

The sole search activity that is actually identified is that Joe searches for a particular book in a specific order: he tries to find it in a bookstore, searching online bookstores before physical ones, and then tries the libraries: first his local ones, then the academic ones, and finally his state library.³³⁹ This still does not specify his search strategies, but it does show us that he prefers to buy books if he is able, likely as a method of expanding his personal collection.³⁴⁰ And, it shows us that he prefers to order online, if he can help it, perhaps because physically going to bookstores is inconvenient. This might be because of the time/effort it takes to run the errand, or because the transportation methods available to him are expensive or otherwise less attractive. This predicted priority could also be what drives him to search libraries in the order he does: the local ones would be closest, taking the least amount of time/effort/money, followed by the university/college libraries, and finally the state library.

This list of locations shows us the information sources that these authors mine in their quest to gain knowledge and participate in their liberal arts hobby. They may not be examples of granular searching or browsing activities in themselves, but they do demonstrate where those activities may be happening. Libraries, in particular, were an important provider of information resources for these authors, and many of these websites also make heavy use of online sources (like Wikipedia or Perseus Digital Library). The prevalence of online sources implies a certain familiarity with the internet (equally implied by the fact that they *made a website*), and even a preference for online research!

339 Joe, "Bibliography."

340 Joe, "Bibliography."

Monitor + Exchange

Monitoring activities are “recurrent meetings with familiar sources and services... both intentional and incidental,” as the source is intentional, but the information gathered is incidental.³⁴¹ It can be distinguished from browsing by the presence of a regularly updated and familiar source.³⁴² Exchanging is the bi-directional and reciprocal act of giving and receiving information.³⁴³ Like the previous section, these two activities often occur in the same locations. The information sources mentioned by these websites where reciprocal or uni-directional sharing of information might be taking place include:

- Newsgroups
- Message boards/forums
- Special clubs (and the events they host)
- Online chat rooms
- Other websites about classical mythology

Monitoring activities are “important for liberal arts hobbyists to stay current and maintain expertise in their realm. To this end, they may receive newsletters, journals, join mailing lists, or routinely check websites from a collection of favourites or bookmarks [or] attend the regular meetings of special interest clubs.”³⁴⁴ Exchange activities happen in very similar places.

According to Hartel et al.: “liberal arts hobbyists engage in exchange as they discuss or debate their subject in person or through postings to a Website or newsgroup. Old fashioned letter writing or emails are also forms of common exchange in this hobby.”³⁴⁵ None of the authors mentioned journals, newsletters, pen-pals, or mailing lists (snail or e-). They did not discuss their

³⁴¹ Hektor, 83.

³⁴² Hektor, 83.

³⁴³ Hektor, 85.

³⁴⁴ Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

³⁴⁵ Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

in-person activities; however, several other locations on this list are expounded. Many of these happen to be places where reciprocity could occur: our authors may not only be receiving information from these places, but adding information to them as well.

Joe and Athena reference several newsgroups³⁴⁶ and a message board,³⁴⁷ respectively. Joe actually gives his username for two forums in which he participates, stating “if you don't mind your messages to me being made public, you can join one of the two forums that I frequent,”³⁴⁸ and that “if I can't answer your questions, there may be someone else who may know the answers.”³⁴⁹ This makes it clear that Joe does not limit himself to lurking on the forums, only reading and never participating (i.e. monitoring them), but that he actually will answer questions on occasion, therefore engaging in an exchange activity. Both Joe and Athena also link to a number of other websites about classical mythology in what amounts to their recommended reading sections.³⁵⁰

Marks also mentions a website that she frequented: the Ancient Sites Online Community (which was technically a message board),³⁵¹ however, it is no longer online. In this case, further study would require the use of a tool such as the wayback machine. It is not clear whether this website was simply a platform for conversations (therefore acting as a host for exchange activities, as long as anyone who read these conversations also participated in them in some way), or also served as a way to post announcements and the like (which would make this section of the website primarily a place for monitoring activities, with the exception of those posting the announcement who would either be publishing or instructing). Fortunately, another

346 Joe, “Related Sites.”

347 Athena, “References and Links.”

348 Joe, “Contact.”

349 Joe, “Contact.”

350 Joe, “Related Sites.”

351 Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

interaction mentioned on Marks' website more clearly qualifies as a platform for both monitoring and exchange activities: special events hosted regularly on a chat-interface, including a regular book club.³⁵² Surely these would qualify as “[attending] the regular meetings of [a] special interest [club],”³⁵³ even if they happen online rather than in person. These results confirm that the authors are aware of and are very likely to use a variety of information resources as a place to monitor their topic of interest, and perhaps even engage in an information exchange with like-minded individuals who also utilize those spaces.

Furthermore, there is a clear bias to online sources. There is no mention of face-to-face meetings or physical resources where exchange or monitoring activities might be happening. Whether this means that these authors perform their hobby almost exclusively in online spaces, or that the offline aspects of their information activities are simply never mentioned on their website for whatever reason (possibly due to a division of their online and offline lives) is unclear. Still, looking at the number and range of information resources hosted online that are available to any interested party helps to refute Stebbins' claim that “social worlds in these hobbies tend to be comparatively minimal,”³⁵⁴ and that they are “individualistic undertakings.”³⁵⁵ Clearly these authors are well embedded in a robust community of like-minded hobbyists located online. Just as Hartel said: “Stebbins probably underestimated the sociality of every liberal arts hobby... vibrant social worlds centered on all liberal arts topics have since been rendered visible in flourishing online communities and information sharing hubs such as Wikipedia.”³⁵⁶

352 Marks, “Mythology Chat Transcripts Index.”

353 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

354 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 94.

355 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 94.

356 Hartel, “An interdisciplinary platform for information behavior research in the liberal arts hobby,” 952-953.

Instruct

In the context of this research project, Instruct means 'to teach,' in some repeatable, modular manner (either formal or informal in nature), unidirectionally from the individual to an anonymous or generalized counterpart, without expectation of reciprocity from the audience.³⁵⁷ Hartel et al.'s examples of instructing activities as undertaken by liberal arts hobbyists include “public lectures, informal talks, interviews, or workshops.”³⁵⁸ Those are all *repeatable* instances of instruction, sessions of teaching held as a sort of event. These websites are not events. Users can come back to them at any time and experience as much of or as little of their content as they like. So where are instructing activities located on these websites?

- Lesson Plans
- Citation Instructions
- Copyright Notices
- FAQs
- Articles on mythological figures

First, Skidmore's section on teaching tips shows teachers how to teach Greek mythology to their students, and gives specific lesson plans and instructions on how to prepare, assign, and evaluate activities for students.³⁵⁹ While the lessons plans only provide material for future lessons, the context and tips he gives around each lesson plan could in themselves be considered a module of instruction. Skidmore is preaching to an anonymous, generalized crowd, and does not seem to expect reciprocity. It is a unidirectional imparting of information to his audience.

357 Hektor, 87.

358 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 9.

359 Joel Skidmore, “Teaching Tips from Mythweb,” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/teachers/tips/tips.html>

Second, Athena and Joe both instruct their readers on how to cite their websites properly in their frequently asked questions section,³⁶⁰ but Joe really goes the extra mile.³⁶¹ He gives long, detailed answers to topical questions such as “What is 'myth' or 'mythology'?” and “How do I find a particular article (eg. person, god or tale) in Timeless Myths?”³⁶² In the first instance he gives a long-form answer to a question that would not be out of place in a Classics lecture, and in the second he gives detailed instructions on how to use and navigate his website. Then, in nearly 500 words, he teaches his presumed audience (students) how to cite his website.³⁶³ I believe this is the clearest example of instruction on these websites, regardless of which definition you use. Joe is not only teaching students how to construct a citation, but explicitly ordering them to cite his page in this (or a similar) manner, disseminated to a generalized and anonymous audience, and expecting no reciprocity from his readers.

Thirdly, the copyright notices present on every single website in our sample could likewise be seen as a proxy for instruct-activity. While they are not technically repeatable modules of information, they do appear on multiple pages on each of the websites, and thus do technically repeat. They also change, requiring users to refer back to them, thus receiving that information over and over, and therefore simulating repetition as demanded by the definition of *instruct* used by this study. Copyright notices brook no argument. The information is definitely unidirectional and reciprocity is very much not expected. Joe gives very clear and firm instructions when discussing his copyright:

360 Athena, “FAQ.”

361 Jimmy Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs),” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/faq.html>

362 Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”

363 Though he has most of the components required for citing a webpage, including the author name, website title, webpage title, and a link, his citation style does not match any of the popular styles in academia, nor does it include a date (and it uses new line characters instead of periods or commas in between elements of the citation). Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”

The myths and information in Timeless Myths is copyrighted. You may use them as a guide, reference or resource for educational purposes or personal use. If you copy a sentence or paragraph, place it within quotes and indicate the source. If you intend to duplicate the document, you must also indicate the source in your bibliography or in the footnotes. The documents in Timeless Myths must not be used for commercial purposes, because you will not get permission.³⁶⁴

These statements, and others placed within copyright notices, are directed to the generalized, anonymous audience consisting of whoever visits these sites. They impart important information as to how the content of these websites should or should not be used and give instruction for scholarly citations.

Fourth, the FAQs, or frequently asked questions section, on these websites could also be considered a location where instruction occurs. Joe and Athena both have pages dedicated to frequently asked questions.³⁶⁵ As mentioned above, both have sections on how to cite their website, and both also have sections on their names (answering the question “I need your name for my assignment...”³⁶⁶ on Joe's page, and “I'm writing a paper and I'd really like to cite you... but, um, what's your name?”³⁶⁷ on Athena's). Like the citation information and copyright notices, these instructive activities seem to be aimed specifically at students. While professors and professional academics might also be seeking a name to use in their citations, the casual tone and use of the word “assignment” in the question makes it more likely they are addressing students. FAQs are often created to answer the questions that someone is being asked over and over, so although the phrasing of the questions may not actually be pulled from a specific question, they are fairly likely to match the average tone of the various askers. That said, teachers do sometimes

364 Corrections were made to this quote in order to enhance its clarity. Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”

365 Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”; Athena, “FAQ.”

366 Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”

367 Athena, “FAQ.”

get unexpected reciprocity from their audiences. They can choose to engage one-on-one (which would be classified as either an exchange activity if the asker responded, or a publishing activity if they did not), or respond to the generalized audience (retaining the label of instruction). It is the latter, in the case of these FAQs. The entire point of replying publicly is to avoid questions in the future, so these FAQs also discourage reciprocity. Plus, the answers are stored in handy information modules, making it easier to classify them as repeatable instances of instruction!

Finally, each article on a mythological figure may be seen as an effort to instruct the users of the website. These articles, in the form of stories, give biographical information about individuals in classical mythology. They are disseminated to an anonymous crowd as separate modules and can be read as many times as the user likes. None of the sites provides users with the ability to comment on an article, making it clear that the authors do not expect reciprocity from their readers.

In the case of these websites, the instructing activities represented tend to have an educational bent. The citation instructions, copyright notices, and FAQs all tend to address students, the presumed audience. Skidmore's lesson plans may address teachers instead, but there still seems to be a very clear audience in mind. It is not surprising that an information activity that centres around teaching is expressed by the authors in a manner that addresses people in the field of education—teachers and students. This makes it clear that instruction activities have a hierarchy: teachers teach, and students listen. Under this framework, performing this particular kind of information activity, the authors seemingly position themselves as the speakers of ultimate truth: they address an anonymous crowd, from whom they expect no reciprocity, questions, or challenges. When conceptualized in this manner, performing an instruct-activity

positions a person as an expert whose information is above reproach, although this is somewhat challenged by Athena's acknowledgement that she is “not perfect... [and she is] trying to rid the site of misinformation, but it still lurks.”³⁶⁸

Unfold + Publish

Using the definition created and used by this project (informed by Hartel's reinterpretation of Hektor's model specifically for liberal arts hobbies), publishing activities represent any public output of information (or expression of knowledge) whether that be through in-person conversations, social media, or publicly accessible texts. Unfolding is its counterpart: the information input, or receiving, processing and integrating.³⁶⁹ Unfolding is a particularly important aspect of information behaviour when it comes to liberal arts pursuits, as it is “key to learning”³⁷⁰ and learning is the core activity of liberal arts pursuits.³⁷¹ It has been paired with publishing activities because expressing knowledge (publishing) often leads to a deeper understanding and more thorough integration of knowledge (unfolding) on the part of the person expressing their knowledge in the first place. Engaging with new information or externalizing known information is not limited to text, but could also occur in multimedia formats such as video and audio, or by attending/giving lectures, visiting museums, or field sites, all of which are activities that liberal arts hobbyists are likely to perform.³⁷² This corpus is completely made up of published information (they are publicly accessible websites, after all), but there are multiple

368 Athena, “FAQ.”

369 Hektor, 84.

370 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

371 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 14.

372 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 6.

places on these websites where unfolding activities could be present, and many of them are tied up with the author performing publishing activities:

- School lectures
- Movies & video games
- Articles on mythological figures
- Bibliographies

Unfolding does not only consist of reading, and that is reflected in the corpus. Athena and Hatzitsinidou both have degrees in the field of Classics, meaning they must have also listened to lectures throughout the course of their leisure career. In addition, Hatzitsinidou cites “abstract, verbal information taught in Greek public school”³⁷³ which indicates she also received lectures or some other form of instruction in elementary, middle, and/or high school.

Simon has a section called “Mythology Entertainment” directed at “Greek mythology fans who enjoy the mythology based media, such as movies, tv series and games.”³⁷⁴ where he provides short reviews, images, trailers, and recommendations for his readers. His reviews give insight into how he unfolds this media via the extraction of pieces of information and then how he integrates those pieces into his previous understanding of the subject at hand. When Simon relates isolated aspects of the movies he is watching and then compares those aspects to the myths from where they come, he is demonstrating how he is integrating the films into his existing understanding of classical mythology. For example, in his review of the movie *Troy*, Simon says:

It's quite interesting to see after reading the Iliad and the Odyssey... Of course, there are lot [sic] of things which are skipped in the movie, but you can't expect all of them in

373 Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

374 Borut Simon, “Mythology Entertainment,” *GreekGods.org*, 2018, <https://www.greek-gods.org/entertainment/mythology-entertainment.php>.

two [sic] and a half hour long movie. There were also some things which are twisted in the movie to make it more interesting, such as the death of Achilles when he dies inside a [sic] Troy which is not true and the death of Agamemnon who does not, I repeat, does not die until reaching his home in Mycenae!³⁷⁵

Simon explicitly links his knowledge of the myths, gleaned from the Iliad and the Odyssey, and comparing them to pieces of information he has pulled from the movies (such as the deaths of Achilles and Agamemnon) in order to have a better understanding of both. The act of unfolding is hard to study externally, because it is an adventure that happens inside the mind of the person doing the unfolding. It can be hard to reverse engineer Simon's experience through his reviews; however, he does describe his feelings while experiencing the media, as well as his thought process and comprehension of the text in question. His descriptions are helpful examples which illustrate a complicated process of unfolding even in these “frivolous” sources of fantasy and escape.³⁷⁶

Hektor acknowledges that unfolding can happen even when the resource in question is perceived to be more a source of fantasy and escape rather than information.³⁷⁷ Simon explains that he treats these movies and games as entertainment rather than sources of accurate information. For examples, Simon state in his review of the movie *Troy*: “I'm not posting this to criticize the movie. I thought it was quite fun to watch, because apart from all the mistakes... they made the main story right.”³⁷⁸ Even still, stories, even entertaining ones like film adaptations of classical mythology, are full of information and must be unfolded in order to be enjoyed.

375 Simon, “Mythology Entertainment.”

376 Hektor, 84.

377 Hektor, 84.

378 Borut Simon, “Troy (2004),” *GreekGods.org*, 2018. <https://www.greek-gods.org/entertainment/troy.php>.

Simon's reviews demonstrate his passion not only to experience, but also “assimilate and then share [his] discoveries and expertise with others”³⁷⁹ in a very clear way. Like other liberal arts hobbyists, he is shown to turn to fellow hobbyists or the general public, in the process creating content (a publishing activity) in the form of reviews—although other hobbyists may choose different formats, such as lectures, presentations, simple conversations, or, most notably for this project, “online genres like Webpages, portals, and wiki pages, on their topic.”³⁸⁰

Another example of both publishing and unfolding is exemplified in every article on a mythological figure that has been posted to their websites by these authors. In order to create such an article they must read, or unfold, a multitude of informational sources, extracting information and synthesizing all the sources into a published output to express the expressed the knowledge they gained from the process. These articles will be dealt with in a lot more detail in chapter three, but suffice to say there are a lot of contradictions that have to be reconciled or explained in Medusa's story before they can be published in any coherent manner.

The final major location on these sites where there is evidence of unfolding are their site-wide bibliographies. There is an entire section on this later in this chapter, so for now I would like to point out that every source these authors cite is another source they had to unfold. Occasionally the authors might annotate these sources (Joe and Athena both do so),³⁸¹ providing some insight as to how they evaluated them or what information they extracted. These annotations can also be considered as published: they are available for others to read and digest, and use. For example, Joe annotates his citation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by saying: “Extensive work on myths composed by the Roman writer Ovid. The main theme was the transformation of

379 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

380 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8.

381 Joe, “Related Sites.”; Athena, “References and Links.”

deities, heroes and heroines to animals, vegetables or minerals.”³⁸² He shows that he has unfolded this work: he extracted the main theme of the work and related Ovid's name to his nationality.

It is very clear that these authors spend a *significant* amount of time unfolding sources. The majority of them are texts, specifically ancient texts read in translation (see “Figure 3: Source Types in Site-Wide Bibliographies” pictured later in this chapter); however, other sources like movies, games, and classes taken in school are also considered. This confirms Stebbins' claim that reading “is the principle way in which hobbyists acquire their liberal arts knowledge.”³⁸³ It also supports Hartel et al.'s assertion that liberal arts hobbyists “spend a large portion, if not a majority, of their time reading.”³⁸⁴ The amount of research that goes into each article, as well as the extensive site-wide bibliographies (and their heavy predominance towards texts) show exactly that.

Dress

Dressing, for the purposes of this project, is a step towards knowledge expression, done privately, as a way to manage, process, and prepare information in a physical manner. Because dressing is a private thing that happens prior to publishing or instructing (when information is made public), it is difficult to study using the methodology of this project; however, examining the structure and appearance of these websites can show where dressing was done prior to publishing. This is demonstrated in the corpus in three main ways:

- Inclusion of images in the articles
- Organizational style of the websites

382 Jimmy Joe, “Bibliography: Classical Greek and Roman Sources,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/classical/lib-greek.html>.

383 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 83

384 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 14.

- Annotation of bibliographies

Selecting images to display alongside the articles about mythological figures could be considered a dressing activity. The authors of the websites would have to seek out images that they consider appropriate depictions of their understandings of a specific myth or mythological figure. The act of dressing includes the packing of information in symbols, signs and images,³⁸⁵ so using images to externalize knowledge is a valid form of dressing, whether or not the creators of these websites are actually drawing the images themselves. Athena speaks to the importance of images alongside text and the ways in which they can help people understand and integrate what they are learning into a bigger picture (no pun intended):

My particular interest, the reason I thought it was worth having a separate site, was that, at the time, there was virtually nothing with pictures alongside the stories. Personally, I think the pictures add a lot; they both aid in visualizing and realizing the stories and people and tell us a good deal about what aspects of the stories are important to people today.³⁸⁶

As Medusa is the figure that was selected to act as our case study for the articles on these websites, it is useful to look at how many images each author chose to represent her. For the purposes of this table, pictures were counted as a part of the article if they were displayed alongside the text. Images considered a part of a gallery were pulled from site-wide image galleries, or galleries specific to Medusa that were linked at the end of the article (but were not physically displayed and/or attached to any of the text).

385 Hektor, 87.

386 Athena, "About the Author."

Table 10: Number of Images of Medusa in Galleries and Articles

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
# In Article	0	0	1	13	1	1	8	1	1
# In Gallery	-	-	8	-	1	10	34	-	4

* Note: a dash (-) indicates no gallery exists, in order to differentiate from circumstances where a gallery exists but lacks any depictions of Medusa.

In the cases where a gallery exists, there are almost always more images included in it than in the article (with the one exception of Mythweb, which has an equal number of images in the article and the gallery). Perhaps this is because it is difficult to find appropriate images that link directly to your understanding of a passage or character (especially if you are not drawing those images yourself), while there may be less pressure to include only the best or most relevant images when dealing with a gallery that has infinite space and no direct relation to the expression of knowledge on the part of the creators, giving the images room not to be the perfect visualization of their conceptions of who Medusa is, how she looks, and what she represents. Finally, it is interesting that all but two of these websites use at least one picture of Medusa in order to get their point across, but perhaps it shouldn't be surprising. The internet is a visual medium, after all, so including images seems like the thing to do.

Furthermore, Dressing is evident in the ways the websites are laid out and how they are organized. Some choose to present their articles from A to Z, like an encyclopedia, and others invent a hierarchical classification system, grouping articles under specific categories. Some have both!

Table 11: Organizational Systems and Navigation Methods of these Websites

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Categories	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A-Z/Index	<i>No</i>	Yes	Yes	<i>No</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Search bar	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>No</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>No</i>

As can be seen, every single site categorizes their information in some way or another, grouping what they view as related topics closer together. Five of nine also provide some sort of index or way to browse their articles alphabetically. This comes in handy for users of the website who may not think in the same manner as the creator, or for obscure and hard to categorize elements that may otherwise get lost or remain uncategorized and therefore impossible to find. This organization work, this managing of information, has to be done before the information can be published, as a decision has to be made about where on the website the information should be published before it can actually happen. Beyond the alphabetical index, which is present in most encyclopedias, seven of the nine digital creations provide their users with some kind of search tool. This belies the need for a carefully managed organizational system or a neat sitemap that makes sure every page is linked. It also helps that the remaining websites can be searched using independent search engines like Google to find a specific page or occurrences of a specific word. The need for these organizational systems will be explored in further detail in this chapter, along with the use of categories/taxonomies.

It should be pointed out that “how do I organize this information” and “how will I find this information” are two different questions. Dressing is organizing information externally, yet privately (that is, putting your thoughts on paper, though not yet sharing them with the world); however, dressing is also done in order to prepare information for publishing. So while the

second question is not central, it can still be an important consideration when creating extensive, dynamic information resources (which these websites are!), especially if the creator is attempting to serve an audience rather than just publish for its own sake.

Finally, though it has already been explained in the section on publishing and enfolding, the annotated bibliographies of these sites might be another location where dressing occurs. Joe and Athena both annotate their lists of site-wide sources.³⁸⁷ Annotating a bibliography shows that the compiler has read each of the listed sources and extracted some sort of information and understanding. By writing down commentary and expressing the ways in which they understand these works, while putting them in a list that organizes all of their information sources, these authors externalize their unfolding activities. If this were to be done in private, it would be considered a dressing activity.

It is important to note that the dressing and publishing activities of Hektor's model can happen nearly simultaneously online; writing a tweet is a dressing activity (outputting information in private) right up until it is posted and available to the world when it becomes a publishing activity (outputting information publicly). These two events might happen within seconds of each other! As these annotated bibliographies are published online, they are considered publishing activities.

Wrapping up Hektor's Information Activities

I agree with Hartel's assertion that Hektor's model is due for an update, and appreciate her efforts to clarify the definitions of each of the current eight information activities and how they should

³⁸⁷ Joe, "Related Sites."; Athena, "References and Links."

be applied to liberal arts hobbies.³⁸⁸ This project has gone over the changes and shifted certain definitions (notably those of instructing, publishing, and dressing information) to be of more use in an information-rich environment like the internet which also blurs the boundaries of Hektor's original information activities through paradigm-shifting elements such as social media.³⁸⁹ Even with its limitations, Hektor's model still pairs fairly well with liberal arts hobbies.

Applying it to the selected websites provided evidence and opportunity to discuss the spaces where certain information activities may be happening. Furthermore, the combination of certain information activities into pairs sparked interesting discussions, such as how publishing (expressing knowledge) could turn into unfolding (extracting and integrating knowledge). This is an argument that occurred in Chapter One: the core activity of acquiring knowledge can also be achieved through the insights that come as a part of sharing one's knowledge with others (publishing it). It was revealed that these authors surround themselves with a robust (online) community of like-minded people with whom they exchange and/or monitor information. Furthermore, there is a clear bias towards online sources (and libraries!) in the locations that these authors search or browse. This makes sense, as these websites also exist online, so their authors are familiar with the web and enjoy using the internet and its resources.

Hektor's model, unlike many other models of information behaviour, includes activities relating to the *expression* of information. That is, his activities include dressing, instructing, and publishing, all of which are likely to happen throughout the course of the creation of information resources, and less likely to occur when searching for information to fulfill a particular and immediate need. As this study demonstrates, the sampled websites all took the time to not only

388 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8-9, 15.

389 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 8-9, 15.

use the information they gathered throughout the course of their liberal arts hobby, but also to share that information with other interested parties. This required them to externalize their knowledge through a complex interplay of information behaviours which were covered in Hektor's model, enabling this study to identify and interpret some of those behaviours, thus providing a further understanding of how these websites came to be—not only through the gathering of information through research, but also the management, preparation, organization, and sharing of information with others.

Even though the model does not serve this project to its fullest potential, the model is still suitable for studying liberal arts pursuits more generally, as it is one of the few models that engages with expressions of information and the creation of information resources. Hartel concludes at the end of her paper that:

Information activity in the liberal arts hobby is its core activity and is therefore quite wide-ranging, well-developed, and central. In most other forms of serious leisure information activity supports the core activity, rather than being the core activity itself.

Hence, the liberal arts hobby is a privileged site to study information behaviour.³⁹⁰ This study focuses on the expression of information as a part of enacting one's liberal arts hobby (i.e. creating websites/information resources about one's topic of interest), therefore the tool chosen to examine the information activity therein—which Hartel noted is a rich and important aspect of liberal arts hobbies—must include, in some way, the ability to *express* information and not simply *use* it. This is why Hartel's suggestion of Hektor's model to study liberal arts hobbies makes sense, even if its application was somewhat limited in this particular project.

390 Hartel, Cox, and Griffin, 14.

Information Architecture

While information architecture is not exclusively tied to web design, the two are deeply linked.³⁹¹

Andrew Dillon's definition of information architecture describes “the process of designing, implementing and evaluating information spaces that are humanly and socially acceptable to their intended stakeholders.”³⁹² Websites can most definitely be considered an information space which require information architects to “determine the uses to which information will be put and create patterns for paths to finding needed information.”³⁹³ Morville and Rosenfeld highlight the importance of structural design, organizational systems, labeling systems, search systems, and navigation systems, to the work of an information architect and the websites on which they work.³⁹⁴

But what does this have to do with this corpus? While the creators of these websites may not be professional information architects, they still had to answer many of the questions that concern information architects: how am I going to organize the information I have, and how will people find it? These are two different questions that are often conflated. Using a taxonomy to find information only works if the person looking for information understands the taxonomy that is being used and knows how to navigate it already. This understanding cannot actually be assumed, yet it often is. For instance, Joe laments the fact that the people who use his website apparently have a lot of trouble finding information using his taxonomy as a navigation tool:

When I had constructed Timeless Myths, I envisioned that my web page be structured into several categories in each myth that I thought was logical. Instead of giving each individual character or tale their own page, I tends [sic] to group them together...

³⁹¹ Taylor and Joudrey, 20.

³⁹² Dillon, 821.

³⁹³ Taylor and Joudrey, 20.

³⁹⁴ Peter Morville and Louis Rosenfeld, *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web, third edition* (Sebastopol, California: O'Reilly, 2007), 4.

However, I have received many e-mails saying that they can't find this or that. Which is why I place a search engine on the home page of Timeless Myths... Unfortunately, I originally had only one search engine in the home page, so not everyone has been using it. To make it easier for user, [sic] I have placed a search engine in each branch, eg. Greek, Norse, Celtic, etc, as well as one in each category... So my suggestion is that if you can't find the stuff you required through normal navigation, then please used [sic] the search engine in my webpages.³⁹⁵

This extended quote tells us many things: first, that Joe viewed the method by which he organized his information (i.e. grouping characters and stories together and sorting them into hierarchical categories, therefore creating a kind of taxonomy for mythology) as the mechanism by which he expected users to find that information. This is supported by the fact that he calls this “normal navigation,” setting it apart from the other methods of navigation available to his users (e.g. the search engine). Joe affirms this when he says: “I have thought this sort of structure was fairly logical and better than a large index.”³⁹⁶ Second, he believes this taxonomy to be “logical” and that his user base would understand his system and how it worked. Yet his user-base was confused! They didn't understand his taxonomy or how to use it to find information on his website. In fact, they contacted him *en-masse* not once (after which he included a search engine on his home page), but *twice* (after which he added the search engine to each branch & category of mythology on his website). This demonstrates that answering the question “how do I organize my information” does not always answer the second question of information architecture: “how will people find this information?”

An examination of the websites these authors created allows for certain inferences to be made. For example, if a website organizes its articles using an alphabetical index, one can

395 Joe, “Introduction.”

396 Joe, “Introduction.”

assume they addressed the question “how am I going to organize the information I have?” with “put it in an alphabetical list!” Plus, on occasion, the authors will talk about their struggles on related topics somewhere on their websites, as we saw above with the extended quote from Joe. In this section we will examine two aspects of these websites that are relevant to information architecture: where is Medusa located on these websites and how does one find her?

Where is Medusa?

Organizational arrangements within (library) catalogues generally come in three basic arrangements: classified, alphabetical, and chronological.³⁹⁷ These organizational systems were replicated by the sitemaps of the websites that were studied. Some listed their articles from A to Z, while others divided them into subject areas so that a user could click from a broad concept to a narrower concept, terminating in a list of links to articles related to those concepts. These arrangements give indications as to how an author thinks about the knowledge they have gained about their topic of interest. The question of where stories about Medusa are located in the organizational schema of the website not only gives an opportunity to understand the way the authors think about the information they have about classical mythology in general, it also demonstrates something about how they regard Medusa herself, especially in relation to other mythological figures. “Information architecture can work as a type of storytelling... the content [can be] organized by other content that would logically be associated with the original information.”³⁹⁸ Placing Medusa in a category named “monsters” means these authors believe it is logical to put her there. To them, Medusa is monstrous.

³⁹⁷ Taylor and Joudrey, 49-52.

³⁹⁸ Garenne Bigby, “Organizing Your Website with Information Architecture Methods,” *Dyno Mapper*, January 25, 2018, <https://dynomapper.com/blog/19-ux/268-information-architecture-methods>.

As seen in table “Table 11: Organizational Systems and Navigation Methods of these Websites” five of the nine websites in question use some sort of alphabetical index, placing Medusa somewhere in the Ms, alongside figures like Medea, Menelaus, and Midas. One or two of these websites include entries on subjects other than characters in myth, so Marathon (a famous plain) and the Mycenaean Age (named for the kingdom of Mycenae) may also make appearances. This democratic attitude positions Medusa as just another topic of relevance to those who may be interested in classical mythology, without making any value judgements or encouraging associations with other figures (beyond those who begin with the letter M, and the fact that she is important enough to be included in the first place); however, this is not the case with an altogether different organizational system.

Systems for Hierarchical Categorization,³⁹⁹ also known as taxonomies, are often used by websites as a tailored navigation system. They “take content and divide the information into sections that are mutually exclusive.”⁴⁰⁰ As described above, although this kind of system can represent a method of finding information, users need to understand how the information they are seeking fits into the taxonomical classification system presented by the website in question before they can make use of it as a navigational tool.⁴⁰¹ Each taxonomy is custom-created for the content on that website and the desired user experience. Studying these taxonomies can provide insight into how website creators conceptualize the information on their website and may indicate how they expect users to interact with their content. As each author may create a unique taxonomy, or mirror what already exists, noting their system and where particular items may fall hints at the author's thoughts on individual subjects and on their information system as a whole.

399 Taylor and Joudrey, 398.

400 Bigby.

401 Bigby.

Plus, comparing the individual taxonomies of a group of sites on a similar topic may elicit interesting patterns. Medusa appears as part of a hierarchical taxonomy on each of these nine websites:

Table 12: Medusa's Categorization through Hierarchical Classification

	1st Heading	2nd Heading	3rd Heading	4th Heading
G.org	Mythical Creatures	Mythical Monsters	Gorgons/Medusa	
GM	The Immortals	Gorgons		
G.info	Monsters	Medusa		
MM	Beasts & Creatures	Medusa		
MW	Heroes	Perseus	Medusa	
Paleo	Monstresses	Gorgons and/or Medusa		
Theoi	Bestiary	Monsters & Creatures of Myth	Gorgons and/or Medusa	
TiM	Heroic Age*	Mythical Creatures	Monsters	Gorgons/Medusa
ToM	Ovid's Metamorphoses	Medusa		

* Timeless Myths technically has an even higher level category of “Classical Mythology,” but seeing as every other page already assumes that category as the classification for their websites' topic, it has been removed for clarity and in order to make this table easier to read.

As you can see on the table above, five of the nine websites refer to “monsters” in the heading immediately above where Medusa is located. Due to the hierarchical nature of this type of classification system, this shows that each of these authors considers Medusa some type of monster, which naturally has villainous connotations. One additional website uses the slightly more neutral term “beast” or “creature,” which may not have connotations as dire as those relating to monsters but still implies that Medusa is less-than-human and less civilized than the various other figures in classical mythology (such as heroes or gods). Stewart uses the much more neutral heading of “The Immortals” which includes more neutral and positive types of

figures. Gods and nymphs appear alongside mythical beings, neatly dodging the need for value judgements of individual characters.

Marks categorizes Medusa by the text in which she appears which is another perfectly valid organizational system that prioritizes the author's interactions with a particular text (as Medusa does appear in multiple texts that Marks may or may not have read, but under which Medusa is not classified). The final taxonomy, created by Skidmore, nests Medusa under Perseus, inextricably binding her to the man who killed her. While this does make some logical sense (Medusa's main appearance is as part of Perseus' myth cycle), users of the website may not think to look under the “hero” heading in order to find the entry on Medusa. If they do not associate the word “hero” with Medusa they may fail to click through, dismissing the category entirely. Some people might think to look for Medusa using indirect means such as searching for figures with whom she is associated, or by looking for the mythological stories in which she is referenced or appears as a minor character. Medusa is connected to Perseus, but she is also connected to a variety of other mythological figures, including Athena, Poseidon and Pegasus. It is not as simple as equating Medusa with Perseus and assuming everyone will find that equation equally logical.

Hopefully this case study on Medusa illustrates the way researchers may infer the ways in which the authors of the websites consciously or unconsciously classify Medusa: as a Monster, as a piece in Perseus' story, as an Immortal, or as a story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This type of analysis is well suited to these hobbyist websites, which are partial to using a unique taxonomy for each individual website. Single-authored websites also allow researchers to make inferences

about how the authors conceptualize the information they present, externalized through the choices they make about which organizational systems to use on their websites.

How Does One Find Medusa?

Navigation tools such as navigation bars, search engines, and sitemaps all help users move around a website and find what they are looking for. The number of clicks it takes to find a piece of information is occasionally linked to the perceived importance of the information with some web professionals going so far as to suggest that a website's most important content be no more than three clicks away from the home page.⁴⁰² The following table attempts to measure Medusa's relative importance by counting the number of clicks it takes to navigate to her entry. In the case of hover-to-drop-down menus one half click is counted, as the menu's sub-headings are hidden from view by default but do not technically require a click to operate.

Table 13: The Number of Articles on each Website & Getting to Medusa

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
# of clicks	2	3	1.5	2	3	1	2	3	1
Scrolling	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Yx2	Y
Total articles	~75	?	~180	~91	~246	?	1500+	?	~38

While none of the nine websites take more than three clicks to arrive at Medusa's entry, that is not the whole story. It is more important for users to be able to locate themselves on a website (where they have come from and where it is possible to go) and have a clear sense of

⁴⁰² Shari Thurow, "User Experience Myth or Truth: The Three-Click (Or Tap) Rule," *Marketing Land*, October 24, 2014, <https://marketingland.com/user-experience-myth-truth-three-click-tap-rule-104760> (accessed December 15, 2018).

direction when searching for information than it is to minimize clicks.⁴⁰³ This is reflected by my occasional frustration in finding certain entries, in particular when faced with a lot of scrolling.

Joe's website is a good example of this frustration: he lists all of his mythical creatures on a single page, broken up by category.⁴⁰⁴ He does give hotlinks to the categories at the top of the page which automatically scroll the page to this category, but does not list the actual entries that appear on that page. You must navigate to the beginning of each section to see which entries it encompasses, whether through scrolling or clicking the hotlinks. And if that was not inconvenient enough, the entries are not organized alphabetically within their respective categories. If you *do* use the hotlinks to navigate to Medusa's entry, that would bring the total number of clicks on the table above to five, therefore bending the "three-click rule." Putting a large amount of information on a single page and letting users scroll to find it might seem like a better organization system, especially if a website creator is attempting to keep the numbers of clicks to a piece of information low, but Joe's mythical creatures page is a good example of why that might not always be the case. The "monsters" category begins 4,064 words down the page, at which point you can click a link that automatically scrolls to Medusa's entry. Her entry begins after a total of 6,653 words, all of which you must scroll through in order to find her content.

Like Joe's mythical creatures page,⁴⁰⁵ a few of these websites contain long lists of entries one after another with only a barely-there horizontal break to delineate separate entries. These concatenated entries occasionally total more than 50 on a single page! Finding the one you want can be challenging when you have only a sliver of a scroll bar for navigation. At this point, using your browser's keyword search tool is practically a necessity. Although it makes navigating these

403 Thurow.

404 Jimmy Joe, "Mythical Creatures," *Timeless Myths*, 2006,
<https://www.timelessmyths.com/classical/beasts.html#Gorgons>.

405 Joe, "Mythical Creatures."

websites a lot easier, it is a little bit like cheating as it is not actually built into the websites themselves. The five (of nine) websites that required one to scroll to find a link to click on for the Medusa entry in question are marked on the table above: GreekGods.org, Greek Mythology, Paleothea, Timeless Myths, and Torrey's Muses. This scrolling is less bothersome on the smaller websites with fewer entries and pages to click and/or scroll through, but on sites like Greek Mythology and Timeless Myths which have an enormous number of entries (to the point that it would be too tedious to count them one-by-one) and a tendency to list many concatenated entries all on one page, the need to scroll and scan a significant amount to find the information you're looking for can be disheartening.

As for using a click-counting method as a measure of relative importance for the figure of Medusa on each of these sites... well, that measurement may be problematic. Paleothea and Torrey's Muses both have a focus on women in classical myth, and each take only a single click (and a small amount of scrolling) to reach Medusa's entry. This makes some sense due to their particular interest in women in myth, which might assign Medusa somewhat more importance. Timeless Myths might also reflect that conclusion, as it covers a wide variety of myth, beyond simply classical mythology, and Medusa takes a full three clicks (and a *lot* of scrolling) to find, marking her as less important to that website. One could also argue that larger sites require more leeway in number of clicks when measuring importance as they simply have more content to sift through; yet Theoi sits in the middle of the pack at two clicks, even though it is most likely the largest site, counting over 1,500 entries.

Chapter One demonstrated that creating these websites falls under the SLP. The SLP tends to frame leisure around the self, rather than the community. This is unsurprising, as leisure

becomes work if it is done out of unpleasant obligation.⁴⁰⁶ This centring of the self is most clearly demonstrated in the list of the eight durable benefits (broad outcomes) associated with serious leisure: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, lasting physical products of the activity, and self-gratification.⁴⁰⁷ These are nearly exclusively outcomes that benefit the individual. Only “lasting physical products” and perhaps “social interaction” (though that is still framed with the self as the subject who experiences and benefits from the feelings of belonging) are not solely about the self. Leisure is done for one's own pleasure, so it is not surprising that these authors are not trying to organize their websites in order to provide the absolute best user experience. The authors are likely to position themselves and their needs above those of their users: they are placing mythological figures, including Medusa, where it is most convenient and logical for them, even if their users do not feel the same. It is unclear how often authors re-visit their articles—perhaps they publish them once and never look at them again! Publishing and unfolding information might be main goals for these authors. Their websites are likely being created primarily for their own gratification and as a part of their leisure activities, and not necessarily for the benefit of the users of these websites.

Bibliometrics

Bibliometrics is “a quantitative method for evaluating the literature in different disciplines,”⁴⁰⁸ or more specifically, “the quantitative study of literatures as they are reflected in bibliographies.”⁴⁰⁹

406 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 13.

407 Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 11.

408 Osareh, 149.

409 White and McCain, 119.

Bibliometrics is the statistical analysis of bibliographies in a certain subject area. Typically this type of study is done in two ways: first through descriptive categories (such as contributing countries, authors, journals, year of publications, and disciplines) in order to learn about the set of bibliographies, and second through evaluative methods that determine relative influence of individual citations.⁴¹⁰ The second method is known as “citation analysis,” a subset of bibliometrics, and is often used to identify a core set of texts in a particular discipline.

Applying Bibliometrics

All of these websites reference at least one other work in either their site-wide bibliography or their entry on Medusa. This allows us to perform some kind of bibliometric analysis on them. It should be noted that the sample size of nine websites, each with varying (and occasionally absent) numbers of citations, would be considered very small for this type of methodology which is typically applied to entire journals or even disciplines. This limits the conclusions made here. It should be noted that this analysis is being exclusively applied to primary sources (i.e. ancient texts read in translation), in part due to the near-absence of secondary sources: across all nine websites there are a total of 237 primary sources listed in the site-wide bibliographies, and only 24 secondary sources listed. They are distributed as follows:

410 Osareh, 151.

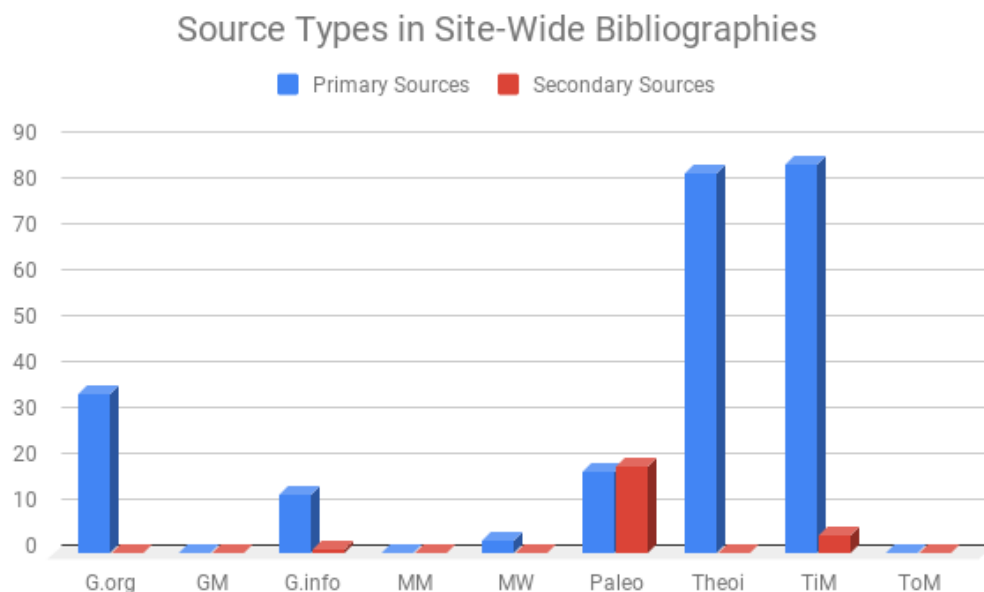


Figure 3: Source Types in Site-Wide Bibliographies

The next two graphs show the break down of these authors and works that have been cited on the site-wide bibliographies according to century.⁴¹¹ The first graph looks at the number of unique authors and their published works (that were cited) arranged according to the century in which the author was born and their works were published. The second takes a closer look at how many citations occur on each website organized according to the century in which the work they are citing was published. Together, they demonstrate certain temporal patterns of influential authors and texts.

⁴¹¹ Authors are also occasionally in question, sometimes being listed as “pseudo-authorname” (in which case the citation uses that author name) or, in the case of Homer, the source of great debate by scholars as to whether they even existed. Compilations (i.e. a single book is cited, but it contains multiple works by multiple authors) are omitted from this table due to the lack of clarity regarding which works which authors are included in the book being cited; works with no associated authors are also omitted from this table. This work should be taken with a grain of salt, as it is not the sole focus of this thesis, so some nuance was lost when conglomerating numbers. Authors' countries of origin, the languages of the works, and the period of publication were taken from their respective Wikipedia pages for expediency's sake. It should also be noted that this question is only applied to the site-wide bibliographies as the Medusa-specific primary source citations has less diversity across sites, as seen in “Table 21: Primary and Secondary Sources Cited on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies” where 171 of the 185 citations come from Theoi.

Number of Authors and Works Cited Divided by Century

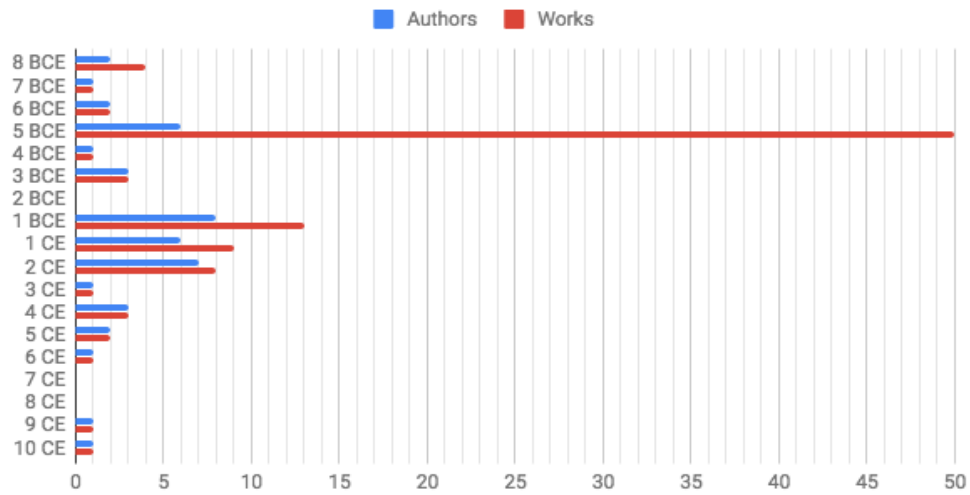


Figure 4: Number of Authors & Works Cited, Divided by Century

Citations of Works by Year and Website

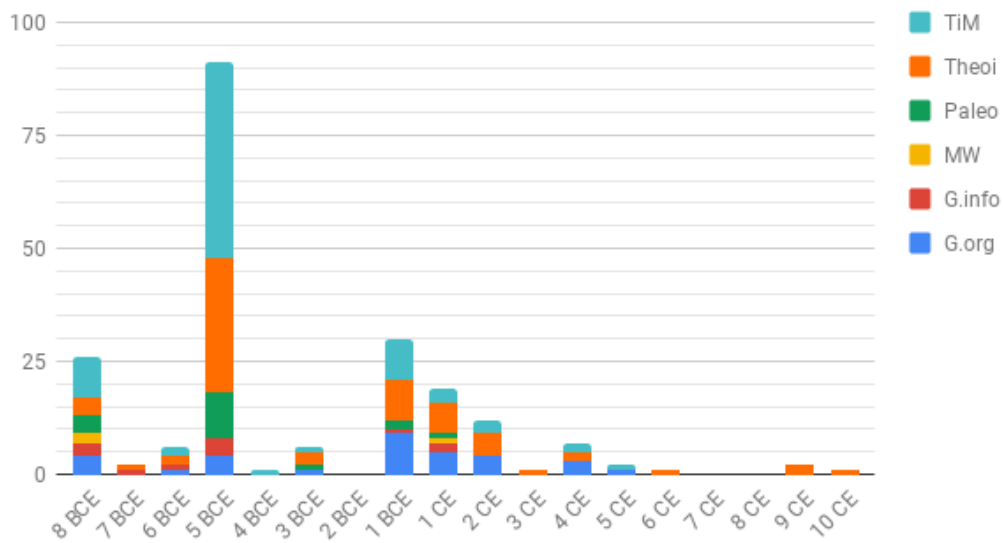


Figure 5: Number of Citations of Works by Year and Website

Dividing the citations by century produces a nuanced picture: every single site with a site-wide bibliography cites at least one work produced in the eighth century before the common era as well as the first century of the common era. The first fact is not surprising, as both Homer and Hesiod wrote foundational texts which are very well known, extremely influential (in both modern and ancient times), and would be part of any Classics-based reading list. The first century before the common era and the first century of the common era surround the fall of the Roman republic and the establishment of the Roman empire, and therefore hold a lot of pivotal writings, including Virgil's *Aeneid*, which approaches the popularity of Homer and Hesiod's writings. And while Mythweb does not cite any works from around the 5th c. BCE, that century holds by far the most citations over any other century at 91 (the next closest is the 1st c. BCE at 30, and the 8th c. BCE at 26). All of these works were written in Greek by Greek authors, and more specifically Athenian authors, and occurred during the Classical Greek Era. This is the period of playwrights, when Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides, and Sophocles were writing. Their plays are often studied in the west as part of the high school curriculum, making them both well known and an easy entry point into later interest in the subject. This is also when Plato was writing. Due to these well-known names, it is no surprise that so many of them made them into the bibliographies. After all, measuring the influence of texts is a large part of what citation analysis is about.

By applying bibliometrics to these works we can see how much work goes into the bibliographies of many of our authors: they do a lot of research before they publish. This, too, makes it clear that these authors are primarily after the acquisition of knowledge. That is, after all, the core activity of liberal arts hobbies. Measuring the influence and relative importance of

certain specific texts to the propagation of knowledge is the realm of citation analysis. Studying the bibliographies of these sites can reveal not only which texts are more popularly read by hobbyists, but also speak to their research process as a whole.

Applying Citation Analysis

Citation analysis has a slightly different goal than bibliometrics. It focuses on determining the *influence* of ideas, texts, and authors within a body of work. In the corpus, that means looking at how often specific authors or specific works were cited in the site-wide bibliographies and on the articles about Medusa on each website (our chosen case study).

Table 14: Top Ten Cited Authors on Site-Wide Bibliographies

Rank	Author & Number of Works	G.org	G.info	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	Total
1	Euripides (18)		1		10	10	19	40
2	Aeschylus (8)	3				7	10	20
3	Homer (2)	2	2	2	2	2	5	15
4	Aristophanes (11)					11	1	12
5	Hesiod (2)	2	1		2	2	4	11
6	Sophocles (7)						10	10
7	Ovid (3)	3	1		1	2	3	10
8	Plato (5)	1	3			1	2	7
9	Hyginus (2)	2			1	2	2	7
10	Apollodorus (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

Interestingly, only Homer (one of the most influential authors to come from the ancient world) and Apollodorus are cited by every single website. Apollodorus just barely sneaks in at number ten, and is at somewhat of a disadvantage, as he only has one work (*The Library of*

Greek Mythology) for the websites to include. The others at the top of the list tend to be prolific authors (or rather, authors who had several works survive the ravages of time), and often playwrights: Euripides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes. These are all names which would come up frequently in Classics courses or mythology reading-lists, as well as the occasional high school or maybe even elementary school course. As expected, Hesiod, Ovid, and Plato also make the top ten. The only name that surprised me (besides Apollodorus) is Hyginus, whose two works *Astronomica* and *Fabulae* never came up for me, personally, during my undergraduate degree in Classics. By analyzing the citations of this website, even if a person had no knowledge of Classics, it would be easy for them to identify the most influential authors and begin to build a “canon” or reading list for this subject area. Let us see if the same holds true for Medusa:

Table 15: Top Ten Cited Authors on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies

Rank	Author & Number of Works	GM	MM	Theoi	TiM	ToM	Total
1	Ovid (3)		1	17		6	24
2	Pausanias (1)			21		2	23
3	Nonnus (1)			17			17
4	Apollodorus (1)			16			16
5	Hesiod (2)	1		12			13
6	Aeschylus (4)			13			13
7	Homer (2)			10			10
8	Hyginus (2)			8			8
9	Pindar (1)			8			8
10	Suidas (1)			8			8

Trying to determine the authors who are most influential with regards to Medusa is a little bit trickier. Only five of the nine sites in our sample have any kind of citations on their Medusa-specific article (though Timeless Myths' citation does not break the top ten). Of the total 185 citations, 171 of them come from Theoi's in-text citations as well as Theoi's bibliography at the end of Medusa's article. This means that the ranking is largely determined by who Atmsa is citing on his webpage, and how often. Still, we see many of the same names reappear, including Ovid at the top, Hesiod, Aeschylus, and Homer. The other more generally popular names may have disappeared simply because they do not mention or deal with Medusa in any significant way. Indeed, Theoi's articles are created by listing excerpts from every source in the site-wide bibliography where the mythological figure in question was named, alluded to, or described. So while Atsma's citations may not truly show which authors had the most impact in the creation and spreading of Medusa's myth—as each excerpt will only count as one citation no matter how long the excerpt is or whether Medusa is mentioned as an aside or as the main character—they can at least show us the breadth and frequency of her appearances across primary sources. The table above shows that this strategy, at least for this data set, is less successful, although it does show that three of the nine sites use Ovid as a source for information on Medusa, and often they refer to him and his works more than once.

Table 16: Top Ten Cited Works on Site-Wide Bibliographies

Rank	Title	Author	G.org	G.info	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	Total
1	The Iliad	Homer	1	1	1	1	1	3	8
2	The Odyssey	Homer	1	1	1	1	1	2	7
3	The Library of GM	Apollodorus	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
4	Theogony	Hesiod	1	1		1	1	2	6

Rank	Title	Author	G.org	G.info	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	Total
5	Homeric Hymns	Unknown	1	1			1	3	6
6	Metamorphoses	Ovid	1	1		1	1	2	6
7	Works and Days	Hesiod	1			1	1	2	5
8	Odes	Pindar	1	1			2	1	5
9	Lives	Plutarch	1	1			1	2	5
10	Argonautica	Apollonius	1			1	1	1	4

In this case, we see a lot of the same names as on “Table 14: Top Ten Cited Authors on Site-Wide Bibliographies” but both Hesiod and Homer take up two places, one for each of their two most famous works. The fact that the Iliad and the Odyssey top the chart is unsurprising. The Homeric Hymns appear, as they are no longer banished due to having no identifiable author. Ovid appears again, but this time due to a single work: his *Metamorphoses*. Once again, we see the way in which citation analysis can help identify core texts in a subject area, even in a limited data set.

Table 17: Top Ten Cited Works on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies

Rank	Title	Author	GM	MM	Theoi	TiM	ToM	Total
1	Descriptions of Greece	Pausanias			21		2	
2	Metamorphoses	Ovid			15		4	
3	Dionysiaca	Nonnus			17			
4	The Library of GM	Apollodorus			16			
5	Theogony	Hesiod	1		9			
6	Odes	Pindar			8			
7	The Suda	Suidas			8			
8	The Iliad	Homer			7			
9	Prometheus Bound	Aeschylus			5			
10	Argonautica	Apollonius			2		2	

Here Pausanius and Ovid have switched places on the ranking, with the next three rankings remaining consistent. This is not surprising, as a single author may only deal with Medusa in one of their works, making it the influential one when it comes to a single mythological figure. Hyginus disappears in favour of Apollonius. The changes are there but they are subtle, revealing the relative stability of influence of these individual works and their authors on a specific figure. The differences between this table and “Table 15: Top Ten Cited Authors on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies” are more drastic, as the influential works are limited to a single figure: Homer and Hesiod are far less prominent, limited to one work apiece and falling lower on the ranking (Hesiod by a single number, and Homer from one all the way to nine). Pausanius, Nonnus, and Suidas are nowhere to be found on the site-wide table (but would have fallen around 29, 27, and 111, respectively). Clearly, the most widely-cited works on a general bibliography are drastically different from those referring specifically to Medusa.

Doing this kind of analysis on the resources used by liberal arts hobbyists can illuminate certain patterns in how they go about learning about their topic of interest. We know every website that published a site-wide bibliography cited both of Homer's works (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), showing how dominant those works are in Classics, even outside of academia. The more specific analysis of the citations on Medusa's articles teases out what texts are seen as important to her and her story (mainly Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Pausanius' *Descriptions of Greece*), although the small sample—dominated by Theoi's heavy citation count—makes these conclusions tentative. This type of analysis provides another method of discovering where these hobbyists go to find information on their topic of interest: primarily ancient sources (rather than depending on secondary sources or modern adaptation). It would be interesting to compare a list

of the most influential texts and authors on these websites—as found using citation analysis—to the most frequently assigned sources in undergraduate courses on classical mythology. I expect the two lists would be fairly similar.

We'll discuss how the authors of these websites (and other interested parties) determine what materials should be canonized in Chapter Three, so for now it should suffice to point out that Athena and Hatzitsinidou have degrees in the subject area. In Chapter One we discussed devotee work—“agreeable obligation”⁴¹²—and how “post-secondary students are, at bottom, serious leisure participants... for reading books required as a part of a course of instruction in a program they like is fulfilling.”⁴¹³ The difference between the worlds of scholarship and leisure might well be smaller than expected.

Challenges for the Collection of Citation Data

Potentially due to their non-academic status, these sites are not always consistent with their citation styles. This means a lot of data cleaning needs to occur before the data can be examined with any sort of ease. There is also an abundance of vague citations that need to be pieced together. For example, “Writings by the mythographer Apollodorus (around 150 BC)”⁴¹⁴ is all Hatzitsinidou gives in one bullet point of her site-wide bibliography. There are multiple Apollodoruses, so first we need to disambiguate the name—luckily she gave his approximate age so we can narrow it down to a single Apollodorus. The one in 150 BCE wrote a few things but most importantly he was thought to be the author of *The Library of Greek Mythology* for a time. That text appears on many of our top-ten lists; its author is now listed as Pseudo-Apollodorus (it

412 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 17.

413 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 5.

414 Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

references several authors who wrote centuries after his death).⁴¹⁵ It is likely to be one of the texts Hatzitsinidou referenced.

A more complicated treasure hunt that occurred as part of this section of the project happened on, of all websites, Theoi. Although it is considered an appropriate reference for academic work, and in general does a good and consistent job of presenting its citations, it does lift an entire section of its Medusa article from *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*, published in 1880.⁴¹⁶ Embedded in this dictionary are several unclear or downright misleading citations. The book has no index or bibliography of its own beyond what is written in-text. The first example of how problematic its citations can be is “Hes. l. c.”⁴¹⁷ *Hes.* is an abbreviation of Hesiod, though how obvious this is may depend on who is reading it. *L. c.* is an incorrect (or perhaps just outdated) abbreviation of *loco citato* (or “in the place cited”)⁴¹⁸ which is more traditionally abbreviated as *loc. cit.* and means the previous citation of Hesiod can be repeated.

The most difficult, convoluted, and problematic citation in this excerpt (and indeed anywhere in this corpus) took me over an hour and a half to place: “Scut. Here. 233.”⁴¹⁹ 233 is likely a page number. *Scut. Here.* is more troublesome. After a lot of Googling, I discovered *scut.* could be an abbreviation for *scutum*, or Latin for shield. Knowing that Atsma included Hesiod's *The Shield of Hercules* in his bibliography for Medusa,⁴²⁰ I decided that that was to what it was most likely referring; however, ancient sources should be referred to line number, not page number (as they tended to be written on scrolls and not paginated books) so the exact location of

415 Wikipedia Contributors, “Apollodorus of Athens,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollodorus_of_Athens.

416 William Smith, ed. “Gorgo and Go'rgones,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology: Earinus-Nyx*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1880), 285.

417 Smith, W., 285.

418 Wikipedia Contributors, “Loc. cit.,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loc._cit.

419 Smith, W., 285.

420 Atsma, “Gorgones & Medousa.”

what is being cited is still a mystery—different translations and editions will have drastically different page numbers! Furthermore, *Here.* is not a good abbreviation for either Hesiod, the author, or Heracles, the second half of the title. The original work was written in Greek and the *Dictionary* is written in English, so there is not good reason for the author to be using an abbreviation of the Latin title (*Scutum Herculis* for Shield of Hercules, or *Hesiodi Scutum* for Hesiod's Shield). It is possible that the “e” in *Here.* is an error that was made either in the writing of the original source from 1880 (as a typo or incorrect abbreviation) or when digitizing it (the book is available through Google Books). The optical character recognition software (OCR) may have misidentified a “c” (as in *Herc.* which would be a more appropriate abbreviation) as an “e.”

As demonstrated in this section, any further bibliometric analysis of these websites would require extensive (and likely manual) cleaning of the data. Further studies would also be likely to benefit from a flexible data mining computer program. This would automate the data collection and perhaps simplify the data cleaning, reducing the time researchers would need to devote to each process.

The inconsistent nature of citations on these websites demonstrate that, while the serious leisure participants are conducting a large amount of research, they are, on average, less concerned with documenting that research process. This makes sense, as the learning done as part of the core activity of liberal arts hobbies is done primarily for the gratification of the participant. These authors are not being graded on their websites. They are not risking charges of academic dishonesty or the wrath of an unhappy professor when they make a mistake in their citations (or forego them altogether). There are no marking rubrics or style guides for them to follow.

Concluding Remarks

While Hartel identifies Hektor's information activities model as being ideal for studying information behaviours in liberal arts pursuits, this model is not well suited for nuanced interrogation of individual activities, and likely needs revisions due to the modern information age and the prevalence of social media platforms on the internet and in everyday life. This research project makes use of the model, and Hartel's commentary, to guide the identification of the information sources used by the authors of these websites (e.g. libraries, school lectures, etc.). While many of Hektor's information activities can be inferred, few of them are specifically identified by the website authors. The authors refer to the general strategies they use when searching for, evaluating, and implementing information, rather than specific search strategies that would be compatible with Hektor's model. Joe, for example, lists several libraries and several bookstores (physical and online) he uses to borrow or purchase texts, revealing the manner and order by which he goes about searching for a desired text.⁴²¹

Even though the model does not serve this project to its fullest potential, the model is still suitable for studying liberal arts pursuits more generally, as it is one of the few models that engages with expressions of information and the creation of information resources. This project proposed a few definitional changes to the information activities in Hektor's model that could prove helpful to future researchers, such as defining publishing as the public output of knowledge from one's mind, and dressing as the private output of knowledge from one's mind. The challenges associated with the use of this model did serve this project in one specific way. By using an updated definition for publishing, and comparing it to the activity of enfolding in detail, a link became apparent between LIS and the SLP: the actions of expressing knowledge

⁴²¹ Joe "Bibliography."

(publishing) and the recursive knowledge gain that often results (unfolding) are reflected in liberal arts hobbies: expressing and gaining knowledge.

Stebbins tends to frame knowledge expressions as tangential or consequential to the core activity of acquiring knowledge for its own sake, rather than an active part of that quest. Hektor's model distinguishes the two, like Stebbins, but places them on equal footing and does not prevent them from happening concurrently. The comparison of the two, undertaken throughout this chapter, supports the idea that learning can come out of expressing one's knowledge, and that creating an adaptation requires a complex interplay of information behaviours at all stages of the project. One does not always proceed from information gathering to information use in a linear fashion; often using information simultaneously sparks the need to gather more information in order to use it once more.

Hektor's information activities model provided this thesis with structure and facilitated the discovery of a trend on these websites: a certain bias towards online resources (for monitoring, searching, and browsing information) and communities (in which to monitor and exchange information). This is unsurprising, as these authors are skilled enough with the internet to be willing and motivated to create and maintain a website for an average of over eleven years. As we saw in Chapter One, many of these authors have a background in Computer Science, supporting the idea that they are familiar and comfortable with online resources.

This thesis attempts to broaden its perspective beyond information behaviour by looking at the ways in which these websites organize and present their content using the perspective of information architecture. The methods of navigation that these authors utilize suggest that the authors prioritized the organization of their information in a way that made sense to them.

Classification schemes were often structured according to the author's understanding of the topic rather than through the use of standardized categories or the accompaniment of an explanatory guide. This style of organization prioritizes the author over the users, supporting the idea that these websites were mainly created as a part of an individual's leisure pursuit, rather than out of obligation to a user base.

Beyond information behaviours and information structures, this thesis also considered the information sources cited by these websites. Bibliometric analysis demonstrated that these websites preferred ancient primary sources over modern secondary sources. Citation analysis further demonstrated that certain influential texts in the field of Classics (such as Homer's two main works: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) were also influential in the websites created by liberal arts hobbyists. Furthermore, the sheer extent of citations from a wide variety of sources reinforces how much work—and reading time—these authors put into their sites. The findings reinforce how seriously serious leisure participants take their leisure. This is a large part of their lives, and should not be ignored in favour of professional or scholarly domains.

It is my hope that this thesis can contribute meaningfully to conversations about the expressions of serious leisure and the construction and content of hobbyist websites. The three LIS perspectives taken by this chapter—information behaviour, information architecture, and bibliometrics—demonstrate the density and variety of information phenomena in liberal arts hobbies available for study.⁴²² This extends beyond information behaviours. Information resources, systems, structures, and spaces⁴²³ all play into the ways in which liberal arts hobbyists enact their core activity: the pursuit, acquisition, and expression of knowledge *for its own sake*.⁴²⁴

⁴²² Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

⁴²³ Hartel, *Information Activities, Resources, and Spaces in the Hobby of Gourmet Cooking*, 30-31.

⁴²⁴ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

CHAPTER 3: THE PERSPECTIVES OF ADAPTATION

Introduction

Goals of this Chapter

Chapter One briefly challenged an assertion from Stebbins about belletristic fiction and poetry:

“of all the different types of liberal arts hobbyists, the readers of belletristic novels and poetry are the least likely to find information in their material.”⁴²⁵ Stebbins places a limit on the definition of information, restricting it to knowledge about how and where to discover relevant material, how to join communities surrounding your topic of interest, who to rely on for informed analyses and the like.⁴²⁶ This definition excludes information that appears in the stories themselves, such as information about the plot, characters, and settings in the text. Reading anything, fiction or otherwise, requires the reader to perform the activity of unfolding (extracting information from a source and integrating it with prior knowledge)⁴²⁷ or else they would simply be looking at words on paper. Furthermore, other information can be gleaned from stories, such as historical modes of thought, textual conventions, and the ideas an author expresses through their text. Yet Stebbins acts as if the only information available to readers “[takes] place outside the core activity of reading a fine novel or poem.”⁴²⁸

Stebbins uses the term “belletristic fiction and poetry” as a more precise term than “literature,”⁴²⁹ indicating that the texts that fall under Stebbins' belletristic heading are likely to be well-known, canonical literature. These books can be read not only to learn something, not only to “better” oneself, but also in order to “get” pop-culture references! Being part of the

425 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

426 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

427 Hektor, 84.

428 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

429 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 82.

western canon, references to Dante's *Inferno* or Joyce's *Ulysses*, or even just Greek and Roman deities are common. They appear in our advertisements, our business names, and our idioms. Reading the associated literature will give us a deeper appreciation of Skittles' Midas commercial,⁴³⁰ help us understand why a security company chose the name Aegis,⁴³¹ or explain where the phrase "Achilles' heel" comes from. Thus, even on the most basic level, the belletristic fiction of classical mythology provides information to its readers.

This chapter is dedicated to refuting Stebbins' notion that information is hard to find in belletristic texts. The articles on these websites can be considered adaptations of their belletristic predecessors, so they provide an excellent avenue for studying the information that exists and evolves in individual stories told multiple times: adaptations illuminate the pieces of a story that are present, forgotten, or changed across versions. These differences can be harnessed and studied across versions of a story. Many disciplines in the humanities tackle changing stories, so part of this chapter will synthesize six different disciplines and their approaches into three main styles of adaptation. This chapter will then compare a selection of the pre-occupations of scholars in these disciplines to the pre-occupations of the authors of the sampled websites, demonstrating how similar questions are on their minds. In particular, the process of identifying and evaluating relevant versions of a story will be discussed, as scholars and the authors of our websites spend a fair amount of time determining the importance of "authenticity" when studying a particular story or adaptation. Then this chapter will deepen the discussion about the mythological figure of Medusa, play with the information in her stories, and demonstrate how theories of adaptation can be used to assess these websites' articles about her. Finally, this chapter will posit that studying

430 Bunnyra.

431 Nick Pontikis, "Business & Group Names: Page Three," *Mythman*, 1999, <http://greekmythologytoday.com/biz03.html>.

the process of adaptation and individual adaptors could be accomplished through the Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP).

Three Methods of Adaptation

Introduction

For this section, I considered the literature of six different fields: the study of classical mythology (a sub-set of Classics), Cultural Studies, Adaptation Theory (from Film Studies), Fan Fiction Studies (from Fan Studies), Folklore Studies, and Translation Studies. They are all interdisciplinary fields which borrow heavily from each other and disciplines beyond, and all reflect similar but nuanced approaches to studying a story that is told in multiple instances, undergoing changes over multiple axes (such as time, medium, authors, etc): i.e. adaptation. The SLP was not included, as it has no direct interaction with the subject of changing stories (although, as will be argued later, it could be used indirectly as a way to study adaptors and their process). While Library and Information Studies (LIS) does occasionally deal with adaptation, often in the form of Children's Literature and/or Fairy Tales, as far as was determined in my research there is no set theory or method to doing so. Therefore it, too, is absent from the six disciplines that were reviewed.

When comparing the approaches to the study of adaptation of these six fields, three overarching methods used to create an adaptation became clear. Not every discipline used or studied all three, and it should be noted that the divisions between them can, at times, be very blurry. This section will first define the three methods that were isolated and then complicate their definitions, as the distinction between each method is not always clear-cut. Much of the

language is borrowed from Translation Studies, so the words “translation” and “adaptation” are used somewhat interchangeably in direct quotations. Even where the transformation discussed is best described as language-to-language, changes across mediums may still be present (such as in poetry-to-prose) allowing for the use of the term “adaptor” in place of “translator.” Films communicate via visual language, after all.

Methods of Adaptation

Although each discipline has its own terminology, I've noticed a tendency to describe three approaches to adapting a story. These are, at their barest and in my own words, the “Literal Adaptation,” the “Spirit Adaptation,” and the “Creative Adaptation.” Each approach does not appear equally in a discipline, or may not appear at all, and each style may serve a very different purpose. They have fuzzy boundaries: Creative Adaptations and Spirit Adaptations are particularly intertwined, denoting two ends of a sliding scale rather than a distinct binary. This portion of this thesis will be focused on defining and interpreting these terms that I have coined so that they may be used in interdisciplinary research that spans multiple fields (including throughout this chapter). This is a useful endeavour because different disciplines may use different terminology for the same (or slightly different) concepts, thus forcing scholars to prioritize the language of one over the other, or to redefine the terms altogether so that they fit each field in turn.

Literal Adaptation is when the new text seeks to reproduce the original word-for-word, or scene-by-scene, and ultimately mirror the story exactly. This used to be a popular style in Translation Studies before the discipline internalized the idea that each language has different

affordances in meaning and that no 'true' equivalence can ever be found.⁴³² Film Studies, and Adaptation Theory in particular, also used to be devoted to “faithfulness” as a measure of what made a film adaptation good: “the literal-minded transcription of the novel in film.”⁴³³ Translation Studies and Adaptation Theory have since pushed beyond this style, realizing its fallacious assumption that meaning could ever be exactly replicated when adapting a text. Literal Adaptation is still sometimes used as an interim text during the process of translating a text from language to language, and may show up in the adaptor's notes as a way to add meaning and explain the adaptor's choices.⁴³⁴ Literal Adaptation also shows up as part of the process of adaptation in Classics, most notably when translating poetry, as the adaptor struggles with reproducing the words, the metre, and the rhyming scheme of the original text all at once.⁴³⁵ The adaptor may use their notes to give the text in the original language and the literal translation of it word-by-word to give the reader a fuller understanding of the original, explaining the choices they made in the final adaptation and how they interpreted the original.⁴³⁶

Most of the disciplines I examined tend towards the second approach: the Spirit Adaptation. I named it this because it is dedicated to emulating the “spirit” of the original text rather than its exact form. This approach has adaptors break the text down into chunks, going section-by-section instead of translating word-by-word,⁴³⁷ and trying to recreate the sense of that section for the reader in the context of the whole work.⁴³⁸ “There is a moral responsibility to the

432 Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies, third edition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 33.

433 Gordon Slethaug, *Adaptation Theory and Criticism: Postmodern Literature and Cinema in the USA* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 2.

434 Bassnett, 57.

435 Bassnett, 87.

436 Morford, Lenardon, and Sham, xvi.

437 Section-by-section is not as easy as it sounds. Poems might “easily” break down into translation units via their lines, verses, and stanzas, but prose text is not as linear as it might appear on the surface. Chapters, sections, and paragraphs (as with a poem's lines, verses, and, stanzas), or even individual sentences, must always relate back to the overall work or risk losing meaning. Bassnett, 121.

438 Bassnett, 120.

original, but [the adaptor] has the right to significantly alter the text in the [adaptation] process in order to provide [the] reader with a text that conforms to [the new language or medium's] stylistic and idiomatic norms.”⁴³⁹ This is a much less stifling rubric. Films become free to use their conventions to adapt a text, substituting striking camera movements for textual tempo, or a thrilling soundtrack for a description of how the character is feeling, expressing the text in visual language afforded by film. What prevents the added freedom of Spirit Translations from transitioning into Creative Adaptations is the “moral responsibility to the original” mentioned above.⁴⁴⁰ Spirit Adaptations are made to share the *original* work with new readers, whether adapted through languages, mediums, or cultural times and spaces. Although these adaptations may give added value to the original source or provide fresh insights as to their meaning, their intention is not to *create* an entirely new work that *they* author, but rather to *share* the work of a *particular* author, of which they are a steward. They act as adaptor rather than author.

The final approach is that of the Creative Adaptation. These are works that abandon that moral responsibility to the original (although they may hold it in high regard and indeed emulate it) and have the adaptor become the *primary* author of the new text,⁴⁴¹ as opposed to claiming it to be an extension of the work of the original author. These works are *transformative*.⁴⁴² Elements such as an alternate ending, or positioning what was once a minor character in the role of protagonist, may prompt an adaptation to be classified as a Creative Adaptation.⁴⁴³ Film Adaptations are prone to falling in this category, as turning a short story into a feature film may

439 Bassnett, 121.

440 Bassnett, 121.

441 Hellekson and Busse, 3.

442 Hellekson and Busse describe the “transformative fan” as one who “take[s] a creative step to make the worlds and characters their own, be it by telling stories, cosplaying the characters, creating artworks, or engaging in any of the many other forms active fan participation can take,” 3-4.

443 Hellekson and Busse, 1.; Creative Adaptations are the bread and butter of fan studies, as “what if” questions are springboards for creating new fan fiction.

require a significant amount of elaboration on the original.⁴⁴⁴ Original authors are often included in the process of a film adaptation. This might prompt us to categorize it as a Spirit Adaptation, as they can provide insight into the original text's meaning and intent, and ensure the moral obligation to the original work is fulfilled; however, an author is capable of creatively adapting their own works!⁴⁴⁵

Complicating Spirit and Creative Adaptations

The distinction between Spirit Adaptations and Creative Adaptations is the “moral responsibility to the original,”⁴⁴⁶ or, to understand and represent the intention of the author in the new work of which the adaptor is a steward and not author. While this is not all that complicated on the surface, untangling these two approaches can be harder than it seems. One solution might be to place the two on either end of a sliding scale, but the distinction is messier than that due to the moral responsibility clause: with it the work is a Spirit Adaptation, and without it is a Creative Adaptation. But just because the adaptor believed they had a moral responsibility to adapt a work in a way that is faithful to the original author does not mean they will actually succeed in doing so in the eyes of the general public—or the original author.⁴⁴⁷

444 Slethaug, 9. Similarly, turning a book series into a movie might require cutting a significant amount of material that jeopardizes the spirit of the original.

445 Arthur Conan Doyle originally killed off Sherlock Holmes, only to “resurrect” him when his fans demanded he continue writing the series. This could be considered a creative adaptation of the original! Wikipedia Contributors, “Sherlock Holmes” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sherlock_Holmes&oldid=813904108 (accessed December 13, 2017).

446 Bassnett, 121.

447 For example Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko (the creators of the original TV show “Avatar: The Last Airbender”) at first expressed their enthusiasm for the planned movie adaptation that was to be directed by M. Night Shyamalan, stating that the director respected their material, but later expressed their disappointment with Shyamalan's version and even went so far as to say they would like to pretend the film adaptation does not exist. Wikipedia Contributors, “The Last Airbender,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Airbender (accessed Jan 16, 2019).; Mike Szymanski, “Avatar Creators Praise Night,” *Sci Fi Wire*, March 17, 2007, [https://web.archive.org/web/20060405040313/http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/index.php?category=3](https://web.archive.org/web/20060405040313/http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/index.php?category=3;).; Channel

Economically, the distinction could be made by evaluating the rights-holder. Fan fiction is “often subjected to takedowns for either supposed terms of service or copyright [violations].”⁴⁴⁸ Fans are rarely rights holders or employed by the original author to adapt their work, as might happen with language translations or film adaptations. But even this gets murky! Works in the public domain get adapted all the time. Rights holders may not be the original author. Their estate or a large corporation holding the rights to their work might have a very different idea as to what a moral obligation to the original might look like, let alone the intention and meaning of the original text.⁴⁴⁹ Aspirational TV writers often write speculative scripts as an audition piece. They use an existing television show as a framework and a source of inspiration and then write a new episode for it, without being asked or paid for it.⁴⁵⁰ This, too, could be considered a Creative Adaptation; however, if that writer gets hired their episode might get produced and aired. Does that retroactively make it a Spirit Adaption, now that the adaptor was offered a contract?

Cultural studies discusses the “structure of feeling” as something that ties people to a particular time and place (and culture), and prevents them from fully understanding those who possess a different structure of feeling.⁴⁵¹ This refers to the way that the shared lived experiences of a group effects the way they experience their present.⁴⁵² Those common experiences shape the

Surfing Podcast, “Korra Creators on Book Four and Ending the Series,” *IGN*, October 2, 2014, <https://ca.ign.com/videos/2014/10/02/korra-creators-on-book-four-and-ending-the-series-channel-surfing-podcast> (accessed Jan 16, 2019).

448 Hellekson and Busse, 1.

449 Vladimir Nabokov instructed his publishers on how he wanted the cover for his famous book *Lolita* to look: “no girls.” Of course, nearly every edition of the book has a girl on the cover, directly counter to the author's request. Katherine Reischl, “*Lolita*. The story of a cover girl. Vladimir Nabokov’s novel in art and design,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57, no. 1-2 (2015): 131-133.

450 Phil Breman, “How to Write a Spec Script,” *The Balance*, Nov 14, 2018, <https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-write-a-spec-script-1283509> (accessed December 13, 2017).

451 Raymond Williams, “The Analysis of Culture,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, second edition*, ed. John Storey (Athens, Georgia: Prentice Hall, 1998): 48-56, 53.

452 Mitchum Huehls, “Structures of Feeling: Or, How to Do Things (or Not) with Books,” *Contemporary Literature* 51, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 419-428, 420.

cultural context in which a person lives and influence any work they might create and leave behind for others to experience and/or study in the future, leaving scholars to discover these commonalities through the study of the documentary culture of that time, place, and people.⁴⁵³ These documents represent the body of intellectual and imaginative work that records human thought and experience;⁴⁵⁴ however, *intellectual* understanding is not the same as *emotional* understanding. Even the most dedicated of adaptors will never have the same sense of a text as the original author does... and the author's understanding of their own work might shift over time. This, too, complicates the notion that mirroring the intent of the author is what differentiates a Spirit Adaptation from a Creative one.

Furthermore, examining author intention is always a risky business. The “notion of accuracy in translation is dependent on the translator's ability to read and understand the original... [translation] is viewed as a skill, inextricably bound up with modes of reading and interpreting the original text.”⁴⁵⁵ And even if one is able to go and ask the author themselves about the meaning of a particular sentence, and what they intended for the work as a whole, Barthes argues that author's intention is not equal to the experience of the reader.⁴⁵⁶ The meaning of a text is not predicated on what an author intended the meaning to be when they wrote it. Rather, the meaning of the text is what the person reading it determines it to be, bounded by the set of possible interpretations of that text. A multitude of meanings can exist simultaneously, as each time a book is read its meaning must once more be constructed. Each reader will have a slightly different experience of a book each time they read it. The meaning they constructed the

453 Williams, 48.

454 Williams, 48.

455 Bassnett, 60.

456 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *The Book History Reader, second edition*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2006), 277-80.

first time they read a text as a child might be substantially different from the meaning they constructed from that text when they read it as an adult, and neither reading is more correct than the other. “It is language which speaks, not the author;”⁴⁵⁷ for Barthes, their opinion simply does not matter. The author writes a text that means nothing... until it is read.⁴⁵⁸

Wrapping up the Methods of Adaptation

The point at which a writer considered himself to be a translator of another text, as opposed to the use he might make of translated material plagiarized from other texts, is rarely clear. Within the opus of a single writer there is a range of texts that include acknowledged translations, free adaptations, conscious borrowings, reworkings and close correspondences⁴⁵⁹

The above quote contributes to the notion that a text does not exist alone. Adaptors must consider not only the original text itself, but also all the texts with which it (and its author) interacts. Were these texts also adaptations? “Intertextuality... is a constant and irretrievable circulation of textuality, a returning to, a pointing toward, an aggressive attempt to seize other documents—the results of this procedure of referencing other texts are also complicitly and irrevocably circular and ideological.”⁴⁶⁰ This raises the questions of this section once more, explaining why the boundaries between both methods and disciplines can be so undefined.

Just as all texts are intertextual, all of these disciplines are interdisciplinary. They borrow objects of study, theories, methods, scholars, and perspectives from each other. The lines

⁴⁵⁷ Barthes, 278.

⁴⁵⁸ Barthes, 280.

⁴⁵⁹ Bassnett, 60.

⁴⁶⁰ Janet Staiger, “Securing the Fictional Narrative as a Tale of the Historical Real,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 393–413, 399.

between them are blurry, and there is a lot of overlap. This carries over to the method by which each discipline adapts stories, or study adaptations.

Although each discipline has their own nuances and preferences, three approaches to adaptation can be found: Literal Adaptations, Spirit Adaptations, and Creative Adaptation. Literal adaptation has largely fallen out of style, or has been absorbed as part of the process, as it is no longer acceptable as the finished product. Spirit Adaptations and Creative Adaptations abound, but can be hard to distinguish. Economic definitions of authorship, the inability for an adaptor to ever wholly understand an author's intent, and the question of whether author intent is actually even important all serve to muddy the waters of what distinguishes Creative from Spirit Adaptations.

Even though intent is a word often used in this section, it should not be the only (or even the main) thing that differentiates Spirit from Creative Adaptations. Instead, the “moral responsibility to the original” as felt by the adaptors should be held as the standard. It is not the economic responsibility to the rights holders, or the understanding and skill with which an adaptor duplicates the intent of an author. Indeed, a moral responsibility has nothing at all to do with how good adaptation ends up being (especially as “goodness” is as subjective as reader experience). This responsibility to a text could be expressed through dedicated study of the documentary culture, insights into the original which heap upon it new and updated meanings, or just the affirmation from an adaptor that they were doing their best to be true to the spirit of the text they were adapting. The difference is a sliding scale, with no real dividing line or tipping point.

The Interdisciplinary Study of Adaptations

Crossover exists in the six disciplines mentioned (Classics, Film Studies, Translation Studies, Fan Studies, Cultural Studies and Folklore Studies). They each use a different combination of the three types of adaptation (as objects of study and/or methods of creation), and they all share repeating themes, questions, and lenses of interpretation that seem to be common in the study of adaptations regardless of discipline. As seen in the image below, several lenses of interpretation popped up across the literature. This visual representation is certainly not exhaustive; this review focuses on the disciplines where each lens was discussed most prominently during a preliminary literature review, and/or where the lens directly influenced the way in which a story was adapted. Boundaries between lenses can be blurry, as they are often interconnected and interdependent. One lens may be applied in a slightly different manner depending on which discipline is wielding it. The symbols and text in the image represent the common threads—the broadest view. The methods of adaptation that are typically used and/or studied by a discipline are also indicated by border colour.

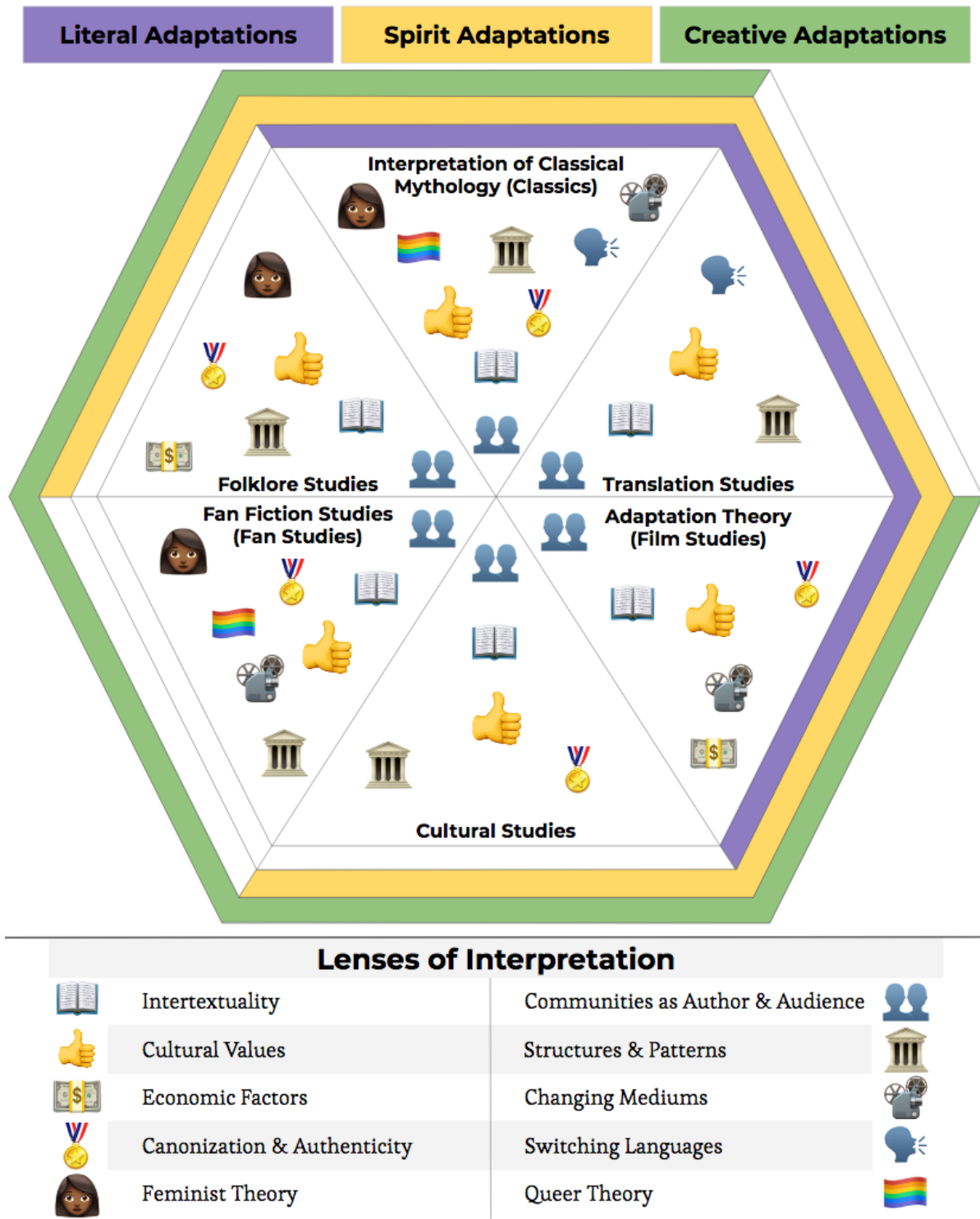


Figure 6: A Visual Literature Review of Recurring Trends in the Study of Adaptations

As you can see, intertextuality is a major concern of every discipline. This is not surprising. The previous section quoted Bassnet, who insisted that no text was an island but rather a collection of scraps and influences taken by a particular author and woven into something new.⁴⁶¹ Cultural values also came up in all six places, and are also unsurprising: texts arise in a particular culture and can be seen as a “narrative expression of beliefs.”⁴⁶² In the case of adapted works that pass between cultures and are changed as a result, this is a particularly easy assertion to make: look for the patterns formed by changes in one or more stories as they cross a cultural boundary and they will likely reflect the new culture's values. The third and final lens that appeared in all six disciplines was the examination of communities as both author and audience. This is interesting for this project, as that is exactly what each of our authors represent: receivers of a text who then become the authors of related texts.

In order to study these websites as compilations of adaptations, this section will first look at the ways in which the authors in question identify as storytellers, thus ratifying our view of their content as stories (and adapted narratives). Once we have confirmed that the articles on these sites can be understood as adaptations, we will ask a particular question of our websites that comes up a lot when studying adaptations: how do they choose their sources? Answering this question provides insight into how the authors evaluate potential sources/adaptations. It often comes down to determining which versions are the “truest” or most “authentic” representations of a story. Of course, the authors of these websites disagree on what exactly that means, as do many academics (particularly Classicists and Folklorists). Who gets to decide what materials are canon—and does it even matter?

461 Bassnett, 60.

462 Eva M. Thury and Margaret K. Devinney, *Introduction to Mythology: Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths, third edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 689.

Identifying as a Storyteller

Joe and Skidmore both use the language of retelling on their websites: “The purpose of Timeless Myths is to retell popular myths and legends,”⁴⁶³ or “The stories are retold for Mythweb by Joel Skidmore.”⁴⁶⁴ Joe even lists “Storyteller” among his aliases!⁴⁶⁵ This places them firmly in the realm of adaptation, even if the exact method is in question. Joe, the most prolific author on the topic of his own process, once again provides a relevant quote:

Please note that I have been using the word "retelling" of myths, which means it is a summarised version of the myths. This is not the same as reworking and changing them, like some modern fiction novelists... [Some of] these writers based their works on actual translations. However, their arrangement and composition are their own. Notice that I have used the word “based.” They may change the material to suit their needs or the needs of the modern readers. After all they are novels. Whereas in Timeless Myths, I have also used various ancient and medieval materials (translated, of course), but I have tried to summarise the sources that I have read. I have in no way, tried to change them like a novelist would. I have tried to keep all my works as accurate as possible.”⁴⁶⁶

We can see that Joe is concerned with many of the same things as this chapter: what does it mean to adapt something, and where are the boundaries between the old authors and the new? Using his description of his process, I suspect his retellings would be considered Spirit Adaptions. He certainly feels some kind of moral obligation to the work (if not a particular author) and is wary of “reworking” or “changing” the stories in question. He differentiates himself from various modern novelists, although he acknowledges they may be using the same research materials, using those words, indicating the difference between Spirit and Creative Adaptations, as Joe sees it. He even points to the changing (cultural) needs as a factor when adapting a work for a modern

463 Joe, “Introduction.”

464 Joel Skidmore, “Sources,” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/root/sources.html>.

465 Joe, “About Me.”

466 Joe, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).”

audience, something that comes up in all six of the reviewed disciplines. Even if he does not acknowledge that translators change a work in this particular quote, he is one of the few website creators who bothers to read a work in more than one translation (see “Table 20: Number of Multiple Translations Cited by a Single Website” later in this chapter for an extended discussion on how a translator's word choice can change the meaning of the text, perhaps limiting the interpretive abilities of a reader, and how reading multiple translations can help mitigate this issue).

There is a certain ownership in knowing; after all, reading is a process of interpretation.⁴⁶⁷ It should be no surprise that particularly engaged readers are driven to express their knowledge of a story and share their individual interpretation with others by externalizing it in some form of documented expression. In fact, that is exactly what I argue to be the process of making these websites: these websites are expressions of the author's knowledge on their topic of interest. They are motivated by passion. These websites are, in themselves, one tool by which the authors come to know and understand the information they have collected through the pursuit of their liberal arts hobby in the realm of belletristic fiction and poetry. Collecting, collating, evaluating, processing, managing, and sharing information all serve to further one's understanding of that information, and drive the need to collect more. The process of creating and updating these websites requires a complex interplay of information behaviours—simultaneously externalizing and collecting information—and constantly confirm the belletrists' passion and dedication to their core activity of pursuing knowledge in a chosen field of interest: classical mythology.

467 Barthes, 279-80.

Choosing Sources

In order to undertake the study of a body of work (such as a particular myth, or classical mythology as a whole), one must first set the boundaries of that body. This thesis expounded at length on its selection process in its chapter on methodology and ended up with nine websites to study. Likewise, each of the authors needed to decide how they would go about selecting their source material. A few of them even addressed their decisions on their website. Much of their process revolved around picking the most “authentic” sources, as will be demonstrated shortly. This concern with authentic mythological materials is not limited to our hobbyist authors, but shared among Classicists and Folklorists alike. This project will compare the ways that academics and the authors of the sampled websites deal with the ambiguous nature of myth, and will go on to discuss whether our authors should change their approach.

Judging Authenticity of Works

One theme that explicitly comes up on multiple sites is the question of “authenticity.” Which adaptations are the closest to the “original” version and therefore more “true”? Which versions of a story are worth paying attention to, and why? Is there a list of influential adaptations that must be considered in any retelling of the story? Who decides which works are influential enough to become canonized? This project used citation analysis, back in Chapter Two, to trace the most popular versions of Medusa's story in the sample by counting which ones were cited by how many of the websites. This method is one way to measure the influence of a version from the bottom up. The authors instead determined value from the top-down: they created rules around “authenticity” by which to judge individual texts in order to argue why they were or were not considered when building their websites.

Skidmore is the first to chase after the elusive “authentic” form of Greek mythology, which is often tied (somewhat erroneously) to whatever version happened “earliest.” As Skidmore states, “although [Apollodorus] wrote centuries after the myths were first narrated (perhaps as late as the year AD 200), [he] seems to have drawn faithfully on early accounts.”⁴⁶⁸ This statement is problematic for several reasons. First, he does not source his assertion and therefore we have no idea from where he got the date 200 CE. Second, it is unclear to which myths he is referring. Third, there is a difference between myths and mythological stories told in the form of a literary piece.⁴⁶⁹ An author may have recorded a story directly from an oral tradition (though accommodations must still be made for the change in medium), which is more likely to be classified as myth, or, the author may have introduced variations on the story that were not already present in the oral tradition, which may indicate a literary tale with mythological content.⁴⁷⁰ Neither case excludes them from being studied as myth, but there is a difference, especially if one is looking for “authenticity” and not “invention.” Myth, like any traditional story, is *anonymous*: it is the culmination of many tellings, of many listenings, and represents a shared story rather than any individual version.⁴⁷¹ Fourth, while a story may have been set down in writing for the first time in 200 CE, it most likely existed first as a part of a living tradition, circulated orally (or through other folk practices such as dance, art, theatre, etc.) by the culture, and was perhaps already referenced or told in bits scattered throughout other texts.⁴⁷² Stories in general, and myths in particular, do not tend to spring from an individual author’s mind fully formed, but rather exist in conversation with other texts and stories that come before. Plus, there

468 Skidmore, “Sources.”

469 Thury and Devinney, 689.

470 Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth, third edition* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 11.

471 Powell, 3.

472 Powell, 11.

is some evidence that the myths in the Greek tradition were inherited and adapted from other cultures, so pin-pointing the first narration of a story may be as hard as pin-pointing the subtle differences between two versions of the same story.⁴⁷³ Fifth, it is not known on what Skidmore is basing his assumption that Apollodorus was faithful. Sixth it is unclear to which accounts Apollodorus was supposedly being faithful. All in all, this is a very hard statement to unpack and corroborate.

Authenticity, originality, and canon is particularly hard to evaluate in this subject area because “myth begins in the primordial past.”⁴⁷⁴ For Skidmore, authenticity is tied to the “invention” point: when was this story first told. But that is not how mythology works. Myths are traded among cultures and across times. They are as relevant today as they were to the Romans, and as they were to the Greeks, and the Mesopotamians. Each myth is reinvented each time it is told. Even if there are no obvious changes to the stories, “the intent behind the telling of them—the significance of the stories to the group and their function within it—[is] drastically different.”⁴⁷⁵ Plus, classical myths originate in the oral tradition, and are therefore anonymous: “literary works based on myths may indeed have authors, but not the myths themselves.”⁴⁷⁶ It is impossible to determine the earliest telling of a myth, and so the question is irrelevant.

Discounting chronology in the determination of what makes an authentic version of a classical myth does not alleviate the website authors' preoccupation with the concept. Joe has a slightly different idea as to what makes a particular version of myth relevant enough for him to include it in his studies, and use it as a source of information for his website's content. Joe states

473 Powell, 51.

474 Powell, 47.

475 Lynne S. McNeil, *Folklore Rules: A Fun, Quick, and Useful Introduction to the Field of Academic Folklore Studies* (Logan: Utah State Press, 2013), 74.

476 Powell, 3.

that “whenever it is possible, I try to read translation [sic] of ancient and medieval materials. I usually avoid using “retelling” of myths, [sic] since what I am writing on my website is basically “retelling” what I have read.”⁴⁷⁷ Although not bound to time, Joe is still concerned with originality; the truest version is the original version, and as the original version is inaccessible to him (due to language barriers and/or issues of archaeological preservation), the next-best thing is a translation. For Joe, authenticity is not linked to being the first-ever narration of a story (i.e. not an adaptation), but rather to being an original copy of a particular adaptation (e.g. a first edition).

Joe acknowledges that his own work is a step away from the source material he is using (he is “re-telling” the story), but not necessarily that translations are of a similar distance (which will be argued further later in this chapter). He does not differentiate between the ancient and the medieval. This is important, and somewhat more accurate than Skidmore's divide, as there can actually be very little difference. There is no living tradition of ancient Greece and Rome—no way to experience their stories or record them (modern versions of myths would most likely belong to a modern western tradition)—and that has been true for a very long time.⁴⁷⁸ Greek and Roman stories were passed down through the ages, primarily through literary works that have been referenced and translated many times and in many ways (often by the medieval scholars referenced by Joe),⁴⁷⁹ but also through the archaeological record as paintings, sculptures, and architecture.⁴⁸⁰ Joe is both aware of this, and acknowledges it: “Unfortunately for the world, many thousands of works were lost, and those that survived were either fragmented or extant works by other writers.”⁴⁸¹

477 Joe, “Bibliography.”

478 Powell, 11.

479 Powell, 11.

480 Powell, 12.

481 Joe, “About Me.”

Although we do occasionally find “original” sources for these stories—i.e. words written in Ancient Greek or Latin on materials that are dated to the correct period and traced to expected regions—much of what exists was preserved by various scribes or writers who copied out the story and who possibly changed a word here or there, fixed a perceived scribal error, updated the spelling of a word, added commentary, or removed sections that may have been too “racy” for the time. Even those texts that are original had to have been copied by scribes (no typewriters with carbon paper or printing presses!) who could have made a mistake or a choice to change something. What could ever be said to be “original” or “authentic?”

Take, for example, the relatively recently discovered Sappho fragments. “The authorship of Sappho was clinched... when the text on the papyrus was found to overlap, in two narrow vertical bands of letters, with fragments of two previously published papyri containing fragments of Sappho.”⁴⁸² This papyrus was written by “an identifiable professional bookhand” on papyrus dated to “around 201 AD, with a plus-minus range of a hundred years.”⁴⁸³ Sappho was active during the Archaic period.⁴⁸⁴ She was born in 630 BCE and died in 580 BC.⁴⁸⁵ That gives 700-800 years worth of “professional bookhands” to subtly modify her original verse. It is, of course, part of their profession to avoid such mistakes or changes, but seven hundred years is a lot of time.

Joe's preoccupation with authenticity and authors changing or inventing material is not restricted to modern authors. He criticized Virgil's *Aeneid* (written between 29 and 19 BCE)⁴⁸⁶ for being completely invented: “Three other writers are great sources of Greek myths: Hesiod,

482 Dirk Obbink, “New Poems by Sappho,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 5, 2014, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/new-poems-by-sappho/> (accessed December 26, 2018).

483 Obbink.

484 Wikipedia Contributors, “Sappho,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sappho>.

485 Wikipedia Contributors, “Sappho.”

486 Wikipedia Contributors, “Aeneid,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeneid>.

Apollodorus and the Roman writer Ovid. I could also add another Roman author, Virgil, who wrote about Trojan hero Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. But this was purely the author's invention to explain the ancestor of the first Roman king, Romulus.”⁴⁸⁷ This might be considered ironic, as this is one time that the “original” version of the story is attributed to a single, known author who may have had other influences, but whose influences could generally be measured and compared. Perhaps Joe sees the story as fake and inauthentic because it is a Roman author writing a spin-off of a Greek story, even though it was written more than two thousand years ago. This issue of age is mirrored on Stewart’s website, where not even classical authors are seen as authorities on the “authentic” stories they retell.

Stewart also struggles with the arbitrary dates of origin for Greek myth. He does not “trust the Classical Greeks to keep the stories straight,” as “the Classical Greek writers and story tellers... were five hundred years away from the harsh and brutal foundations of Greek culture and myths.”⁴⁸⁸ He seems to be referring to Archaic Greece as the source of these originals. While the Trojan Cycle appear to be Greek in origin, dating back to the bronze age, “other very important stories had their beginnings not in Greece, but in the non-Indo-European Near East,”⁴⁸⁹ or Ancient Mesopotamia. Even though the earliest dates may be blurry, Stewart still insists on associating “earliest” with “most authentic” when it comes to these stories: “even though the Classical Greek and Roman versions of the Ancient Greek myths outnumber the authentic texts I will try to, eventually, only list the oldest stories on these pages.”⁴⁹⁰ This is especially interesting, as he has a section dedicated to the question “where do the Greek myths STOP?”⁴⁹¹

487 Joe, “About Me.”

488 Michael Stewart, “Introduction,” *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*, 2005, <http://messagenetcommresearch.com/myths/essays/introduction.html>.

489 Powell, 51.

490 Stewart, “Introduction.”

491 Stewart, “Introduction.”

At what point in time can we assume that the essence of Greek mythology was lost? The decision as to when exactly the essence was lost is strictly arbitrary, but when I read Greek myths as told by the Roman, Ovid, circa 20 B.C.E., I get a little skeptical as to the depth of his insight... after all, he was a thousand years, a language and a culture away from the origins of the myths... all he could possibly tell us is how Romans viewed Greek mythology... This is important for the study of the Romans but not of the Greeks.”⁴⁹²

This approach is so interesting because while he acknowledges the arbitrariness of the “end” date, he still seems very focused on a specific “beginning” date (approximately 1000 BCE, according to Stewart's math). He also uses particularly strong and dismissive language, even for the authors in the Classical period! How does he expect to get these “oldest stories” to which he refers? As discussed above, this culture's tradition is long-dead, and only survives through mythological stories that have been lucky enough to be preserved by various scholars and scribes including those pesky “Classical Greeks.”

What none of these authors considers is the idea that the same work, or rather versions of it, can belong equally to multiple people, cultures, places and times. Although there might be changes to the narrative—or none at all—a singular story could be equally treasured by each culture by which it is adopted, inheriting new meanings as it inherits new contexts. Take *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, for example. It has changed over the decades, through multiple adaptations, and has come to mean very different things for very different cultural contexts. The story was originally conceived as a way to draw public interest to the building (Notre-Dame, the physical church), which had been damaged over the centuries and was in poor repair, and possibly raise support for renovations (as well as a way to satisfy Hugo's intellectual interest in

⁴⁹² Stewart, “Introduction.”

the building, and his desire to support himself through his writing).⁴⁹³ “*Notre-Dame de Paris*, the book, is actually a lengthy screed about the importance of architecture and the way it shapes the lives, ideas, and culture of those who occupy its spaces.”⁴⁹⁴ Later adaptations add or amplify other themes which were not necessarily present in the original novel, such as social justice, the plight of the marginalized, and progressive societal change.⁴⁹⁵ In particular, the 1939 remake leans into humanism over buildings and prioritizes the marginalized characters and their plights (and it is this version from which the Disney adaptation borrows most heavily).⁴⁹⁶ The film features the Romani as a persecuted minority at a time when Hitler was about to slaughter them in the thousands, and was specifically screened at a film festival that was created to oppose Nazism.⁴⁹⁷ This gave the adaptation and its newly minted major themes real power, prominence, and influence over future versions and future audiences. Most modern audiences now associate the story of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* with themes of social justice and progressive societal changes, though the original novel focuses very little on the plight of marginalized groups.⁴⁹⁸ “Consider that if this story is to remain relevant, maybe Hugo's original intent doesn't so much matter as much as the way people reinterpret it... and consider also that Victor Hugo might be ok with that.”⁴⁹⁹ The same might be said of any classical myth that circulates today in the modern west, outside of scholarship, yet ever-present in the modern mind.

As can be seen, even a single lens taken from various adaptation theories can provide a fascinating angle with which to study these websites. Some perspectives may be more present on

493 Lindsay Ellis, “The Case for Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*,” *YouTube*, October 31, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIiWy3TZ1eI>.

494 Ellis.

495 Ellis.

496 Ellis.

497 Ellis.

498 Ellis.

499 Ellis.

these websites than others, but these questions are definitely on the minds of our authors, though they rarely have a simple answer. Scholars who are similarly fascinated with these questions must quickly get comfortable with ambiguity and contradiction. Classicists emphasize that there is not, nor was there ever, a “pristine, platonically ideal 'ur-myth' of [any sort] floating around in the cultural ether, from which individual 'versions' were derived and against which the details of each 'version' could be judged accurate or aberrant.”⁵⁰⁰ It is important to remember that Ancient Greece and Rome spanned many centuries, multiple millenia, even, and that not only time but also geography was a factor; individual cities may have had their own version of a specific myth which was no more correct, original, or authentic, than any other city.⁵⁰¹ Indeed, “every telling of a myth is a part of that myth: there is no ur-version, no authentic prototype, no true account.”⁵⁰²

“Of course, an individual myth—and individual narration or representation—that becomes famous may influence or even motivate the development of other myths... but each narration or representation is nonetheless an independent agent, reflecting its own environments and its own conditions of enunciation.”⁵⁰³ There may be no original ur-myth, but there does exist a core of collectively shared history and traits behind the name of each figure of mythology, anchoring a story yet allowing a narrator to move freely, innovating and adjusting the tale according to their needs and circumstances.⁵⁰⁴ Perhaps this is why these websites tend to be

500 Sarah Iles Johnston, “Demeter, Myths, and the Polyvalence of Festivals,” *History of Religions* 52, no. 4 (May 2013): 370-401, 373.

501 Johnston, 373.

502 Marina Warner, *Six Myths of Our Time: Little Angels, Little Monsters, Beautiful Beasts, and More* (New York: Random, 1994), 13.

503 Johnston, 373.

504 Johnston, 394.

organized according to a mythological figure—a name—rather than a single instance of a story.⁵⁰⁵ Many of them explicitly acknowledge the existence of multiple versions:

Table 18: Multiple Versions of Medusa's Story on a Single Article

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Multiple Versions?	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sourced?	<i>No</i>	Yes	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes

Six of the nine websites speak of only one coherent version, seemingly as if every re-telling is either a take on that same overall story, or is illegitimate in some way and therefore not included. An alternate explanation is simply that they digested multiple versions and made the choice to re-express it as a single story, smoothing over any apparent contradictions or inconsistent information. In five of the six cases, the origin of their singular narrative is not stated, so it is hard to say from which specific version their narration is inspired (if any). On the other hand, three of the websites deal with more than one version, often the different origin stories for Medusa: either she was always a monster, or was turned into one. In these cases, they cite the different versions they are referencing. This is interesting because the contradictions in the stories, the elements that make it hard to mold Medusa's story into a singular, linear narrative, seem to deserve some explanation. Atmsa specifically references time period as a determining factor when discussing major changes in individual versions of the same tale: “according to late classical poets, [Medusa] was once a beautiful woman who was transformed into a monster by

⁵⁰⁵ Marks' site does use the second way to group her articles, but then lists names as subheadings, and often brings in other sources beyond the text she used as a main heading. Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

Athena as punishment for lying with Poseidon in her shrine. Earlier Greek writers and artists, however, simply portray her as a monster born into a large family of monsters.”⁵⁰⁶

The authors of these websites are certainly aware of the existence of multiple versions of Medusa's stories. Some attempt to collapse them into one narrative—glossing over contradictory elements or arguing that versions containing those element are less “true” and thus not worthy of consideration—while others acknowledge the presence of multiple versions explicitly. Is one approach better than the other? Certainly Classicists and Folklorists prefer to acknowledge ambiguity and move past it... but are academics always right? And is it even fair to compare the two? After all, academics are paid to engage in intellectual work!

Back in Chapter One, this project explored Stebbins' concept of devotee work which blurs the line between work and leisure: occupational devotees “feel a powerful *occupational devotion*, or strong, positive attachment to a form of self-enhancing work, where the sense of achievement is high and the core activity is endowed with such intense appeal that the line between this work and leisure is virtually erased.”⁵⁰⁷ Stebbins explicitly links this concept to academia when he classifies post-secondary students as “serious leisure participants preparing themselves for a career in what they hope will be 'devotee work'”⁵⁰⁸ in an academic setting. Plus, we know from Chapter One that both Athena and Hatzitsinidou have undergraduate degrees in Classics, on top of graduate degrees in Anthropology and Education, respectively.⁵⁰⁹ With this in mind, how do our authors differ from academics? They share the same anxieties around authenticity even if their responses differ—after all, Classicists and Folklorists would not spend time explaining that ambiguity is acceptable and inherent to their materials if they were never

506 Atsma, “Gorgones & Medousa.”

507 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 11.

508 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 5.

509 Athena, “About the Author.”; Hatzitsinidou, “About this Website.”

anxious about it in the first place. The following section will discuss the ways in which these websites do and do not resemble academic works to provide some clarity to the tensions explained above.

Can these Websites be Considered Academic?

Chapter One established that devotee work is encompassed by serious leisure: a person can be paid or obligated to do something, but as long as the worker wants to and enjoys doing that thing, finding it fulfilling, that work can instead be considered leisure.⁵¹⁰ Stebbins provides academics as an example of occupational devotion: professors are paid to pursue knowledge (the core activity of liberal arts hobbies) in an area they are passionate about.⁵¹¹ Therefore, stating that these websites represent a leisure activity does not necessarily exclude them from being considered academic resources made by scholars (i.e. devotees). This section is dedicated to evaluating these websites on that basis: are they or are they not academic in nature?

First of all, only two of the website authors are known to have a degree relating to Classics in some way, as noted in “Table 3: Professional and Academic Backgrounds of Sampled Authors” (Athena and Hatzitsinidou). That said, four of these websites do not give any indication whatsoever of any degrees on the part of their author, including Theoi which is colloquially known as an academic source.⁵¹² Having a degree in an area is shorthand for expertise, but not having a degree in a specific field does not necessarily disqualify anyone from publishing in that field, or even from being considered an authoritative source. So whether a source is considered

⁵¹⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 11.

⁵¹¹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 5.

⁵¹² My undergraduate degree was in Classics, and completed at the University of Alberta in 2015. Many of my professors, including Dr. Selina Stewart, who served on the committee for this master's thesis, cited Theoi as an academic source and encouraged their students to use it for their papers and projects.

academic in nature does not always depend on whether or not their authors have a degree in a related field—especially because degreed academics are capable of publishing their subject knowledge in non-academic ways, such as in professional journals, online blogs, twitter threads, conversations, and even bed-time stories. These belletrists demonstrate their expertise through the amount of research and work they have put into learning about classical mythology, rather than through the completion of a relevant post-graduate degree. Liberal arts hobbies are part of the *serious* leisure perspective for a reason. Plus, the entire point of engaging in a liberal arts hobby is to gain expertise in a particular subject and is often done outside of formal education paradigms. Therefore no degree does not mean no expertise.

Second of all, none of the websites in the sample is peer-reviewed to the standards of an academic journal (although those standards can be questionable).⁵¹³ To be fair, according to “Table 1: Contributors to the Websites,” two websites credit at least one proofreader and/or editor, and two websites credit some kind of advisor or support person. We do not get much information about these second pairs of eyes, though, so it is hard to tell whether they lend subject-specific expertise, comparable to a peer-reviewer for an academic journal,⁵¹⁴ or are simply correcting typos and other grammatical errors. When speaking of his support person, Joe explicitly acknowledges her subject expertise by thanking her for her “valuable knowledge in

513 Richard Smith, “Peer review: a flawed process at the heart of science and journals,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99, no. 4 (April 2006): 178-192.

514 While peer-reviewers do not technically have to have subject-specific expertise in order to review a paper, they are expected to (in an ideal world) substantiate the statements of the author, ensuring the manuscript is technically sound and that its claims are supported. While this could be achieved through extensive research on the part of the reviewer, it is more common to ask a reviewer who is already familiar with aspects of the paper to review it, even if they can only speak to a specific part of the methodology (and asking other reviewers to focus on other aspects of that paper). Mark Staniland, “What makes a great peer reviewer? Tips from Nature Research editors,” *Of schemes and memes: a community blog from nature.com*, November 4, 2016, <http://blogs.nature.com/ofschemasandmemes/2016/11/04/what-makes-a-great-peer-reviewer-tips-from-nature-research-editors>.

mythology, art, history, and religion.”⁵¹⁵ The readers do not know how she obtained that knowledge, what her level of expertise is, or how deeply she applied her knowledge to the website's contents. And, as established earlier, a degree in a field is not necessarily the be-all-end-all of academic publishing. Skidmore simply announces his advisor as such, with no more details on who they are or in what manner they advised him.⁵¹⁶ Stewart and Joe thank their proofreaders with minimal fan-fare and no further details.⁵¹⁷

Thirdly, many of these websites have the occasional typo or other grammatical issue. As might be evident by this point in the thesis, Joe in particular makes lots of errors in his writing. This applies to both his more casual writing style when talking about himself and his website in the “about me” sections, as well as his more formal writing in the individual articles on mythological figures. This indicates that he does not value grammar as highly as most academic publications do. Joe's eclectic use of spelling and grammar would not be acceptable in most (if not all) academically-minded publications. Joe's work might be dismissed as non-academic due to his nonchalant approach to grammar, but, as seen in the table below, Joe has possibly produced the most robust site-wide bibliography of all the websites in the sample, including Atsma's website, Theoi, which is regarded as a source suitable for use by academics.

Table 19: Primary and Secondary Sources Cited on Site-Wide Bibliographies

	Total	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Primary	237	35	0	13	0	3	18	83	85	0
Secondary	24	0	0	1	0	0	19	0	4	0

⁵¹⁵ Jimmy Joe, “Acknowledgements,” *Timeless Myths*, 2006, <http://www.timelessmyths.com/thanks.html>.

⁵¹⁶ Skidmore, “Mythweb.”

⁵¹⁷ Joe, “Acknowledgements.”; Michael Stewart, “About this Site.”

Joe cites the highest number of site-wide sources at 85, with Theoi (the “academic” source) citing 83. To be fair, Joe often cites the same work more than once, as he will occasionally read the same work in multiple translations. When broken down into unique citations, as seen below on “Table 22: Number of Multiple Translations Cited by a Single Website,” Joe “only” cites 68 unique works, compared to Theoi's 80; however, Joe's approach could be considered more rigorous than Atsma's. A translator must inherently change a work when adapting it between languages or mediums, so reading the same work by multiple translators can serve as a check and balance against different passages, and will give a more thorough understanding of a work than is possible by only reading one translation, if it can not be read in its original language.

Table 20: Number of Multiple Translations Cited by a Single Website

	Total	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
1 Translation	199	35	0	13	0	3	18	77	53	0
2 Translations	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	13	0
3 Translations	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Unique Citations	217	35	0	13	0	3	18	80	68	0

* This table only includes primary sources included on the site-wide bibliographies.

As can be seen in the above table, only Atsma and Joe explicitly acknowledge they have read the same work in different translations. Joe really goes the extra step in two cases to read three versions of the same story (Homer's *Iliad* and the *Homeric Hymns*, for the record). While Atmsa does read more than one translation, this only happens three times (Pindar's *Odes*, the

Orphic Hymns, and Photius' *Library*). In this way, the amount of research Joe did for his site might not only match Atsma's, but perhaps outshine it.

Marks, too, seems aware of the power of translations and that reading more than one may provide a deeper understanding of a work: she provides four translations of the same excerpt from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a part of her article on Medusa (which is why it is not reflected in the table above).⁵¹⁸ Its interesting to note that Marks and Athena both seem to have a particular interest in women in Greek myth,⁵¹⁹ and also happen to cite a relatively large number of secondary sources. Athena does not have any citations on her individual Medusa article, but cites 19 secondary sources on her site-wide bibliography. Marks, who does not have a site-wide bibliography, cites four (as seen on “Table 21: Primary and Secondary Sources Cited on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies” below). Although the sample size is too small to say for sure, it is interesting that the two women share a narrower interest in myth which is complimented by secondary sources. This may be due to the default male-perspective in surviving works in the archaeological record: in order to get more information on the lives of women in ancient times and the female figures in mythology they needed to turn to scholars who study that aspect of myth, rather than being able to get that information exclusively from translations of literary works about mythology.

Finally, while most of these websites perform some sort of research on primary sources and then summarize them, far fewer websites research secondary sources or do interpretive work. Most, if not all, scholarly works perform some sort of literature review or otherwise engage in conversation with the work of other scholars, often represented by secondary sources.

⁵¹⁸ Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

⁵¹⁹ Paleothea's subtitle is “Women in Greek Myth” and Marks has a full section on Heroines (and no complimentary section on Heroes—Most of her section headings are individual texts, such as the *Odyssey* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). Athena, “Paleothea.”; Marks, “Torrey's Muses.”

Theoi, the only officially-sanctioned academic website in our sample, has an explicit policy against using secondary sources: “analysis of the texts and interpretation of the stories of myth is currently beyond the scope of the project.”⁵²⁰ While the majority of Theoi's entries simply list all the quotes from primary sources that refer to the subject in question, Atsma does do some interpretive work. There are two sections where Atsma synthesizes and presents his knowledge about Medusa. The first is in the introduction to the article (227 words), and the second is in the commentary section (246 words) at the end of the article. This kind of commentary is rare. While Athena and Pontikis do comment on their content, it is through casual asides (“Talk about a bad hair day!”)⁵²¹ or statements of opinion (“I am of the opinion that feminists should love and reclaim Medusa as their own”),⁵²² rather than substantive interpretive work. Aside from Atsma, the closest any of the authors gets to doing interpretive work is Marks, although she summarizes the work of scholars rather than providing her own arguments:

Some scholars believe that the Greek and Roman Medusa myth, as told by Ovid, expresses the vanquishing of the great goddess religions as the male gods Zeus/Jupiter and Poseidon/Neptune gained power. Others view it as expressive of the subjugation of women's bodies and enslavement of their spirit by a violent and oppressive male-oriented culture, which viewed Medusa's life-giving, creative, primal energy as threatening.⁵²³

As seen above in “Table 19: Primary and Secondary Sources Cited on Site-Wide Bibliographies” only three websites cite secondary sources on their site-wide bibliography: Timeless Myths, Paleothea, and Greek-Gods.info. This changes when examining the websites which cite secondary sources on their articles about Medusa.

⁵²⁰ Atsma, “Theoi Greek Mythology.”

⁵²¹ Nick Pontikis, “Medusa the Gorgon,” *Mythman*, 1999, <http://beastsandcreatures.com/medusa.html>.

⁵²² Ailia Athena, “Medusa,” *Paleothea*, 2009, <https://www.paleothea.com/LadyMonsters.html#Medusa>.

⁵²³ Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

Table 21: Primary and Secondary Sources Cited on Medusa-Specific Bibliographies

	Total	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Primary	185	0	1	0	1	0	0	171	2	10
Secondary	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	4

Only two websites include such citations, and only six sources are ever cited, occasionally more than once (leading to the inflated numbers above).⁵²⁴ As you can see below, although Theoi claims to exclude secondary sources, Atsma still references two works: he cites the preface of a translated work, which would have been written by the translator (or perhaps a different, but still modern, scholar) as well as a dictionary of mythology (from which he pulls the entire entry on Gorgons).⁵²⁵ Marks is the only other author to cite secondary sources in her article on Medusa. She also includes multiple translations of the same passage of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for comparison, which indicates a level of rigour in her research.

Table 22: List of Cited Secondary Sources on Medusa

Cited Source	Theoi	ToM
Geha, Richard. "For the Love of Medusa." <i>Psychoanalytic Review</i> , vol.62, no.1, 1975		1
Hyginus. <i>The Myths of Hyginus</i> . Translation by Grant, M (Preface)	4	
Le Van, <i>The Gorgon Medusa</i> , Women in Antiquity, 1996.		1
Sarton, May. <i>The Muse as Medusa</i> , 1978. from <i>Invocations and Mythologies</i> , in <i>Collected Poems of May Sarton</i>		1
Smith, William, ed. <i>A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology: Earinus-Nyx</i> , vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University, 1880.	2	
Unknown "Psychoanalytic Interpretations"		1

*It should be noted that while the data has been somewhat cleaned or elaborated upon, these citations appear, for the most part, as they do on the websites themselves.

⁵²⁴ While the site-wide bibliographies have no reason to cite a work more than once, except to list an alternative translation, citations that occur as part of an article may occur multiple times as the author refers to different passages, the same passage more than once, or cites a source once in-text and once in the article's bibliography.

⁵²⁵ Atsma, "Gorgones & Medousa."

Does the occasional typo truly disqualify Joe's rigorous research process and prevent his website from being considered an academic source? After all, as shown on “Table 7: Websites Linking to Each Other” in Chapter One, Theoi (an academically approved source) does provide readers a link to Timeless Myths, as well as Mythman, Mythweb, and Paleothea, showing some trust in their work. How much research indicates a scholarly level of inquiry? While these websites certainly have scholarly elements (such as bibliographics and citations), and some even use a proofreader or editor, they are not the same as a peer-reviewed piece of academic scholarship published in a well-regarded journal. Theoi may be considered an “academic” source by scholars in the field, but his website is used as a tool to discover excerpts from primary sources as he does very little interpretation of his own. He is not publishing new interpretations or translations. The other sites in the corpus re-tell Medusa's story in a way he does not, and rely much less on citing direct quotes. Not being considered an academic source is not the end of the world. A blog post was recently cited in a Supreme Court decision, demonstrating that non-academic writing can be taken seriously, be considered an important and credible source of information, and be highly valued by individuals and society alike.⁵²⁶

Wrapping up Authenticity & Academia: Does it Matter Who Chooses Sources and How?

Even if Folklorists and Classicists choose to view all versions of a story as equally valid, that does not mean they cannot engage in conversations about authenticity. “The main interest of folklore scholars is not necessarily whether traditions are authentic or not but rather the ways

⁵²⁶ “Professors cited in Supreme Court decision on Redwater case,” *Faculty of Law*, University of Calgary, January, 31, 2019, <https://news.ucalgary.ca/law/professors-cited-supreme-court-decision-redwater-case>.

groups perceive authenticity.”⁵²⁷ And, while all adaptations may be valued, that does not mean they are equally considered or equally influential. This paper covered citation analysis in Chapter Two, using that method to point out the most frequently cited texts on these websites in order to show what adaptations were dominant. If an adaptation is sufficiently influential it can overshadow all the other versions of the story, even if each of them are viewed as equally truthful and/or authentic. Disney, “the dominant creator of fairy tale films,”⁵²⁸ forced all the adaptations that came after to pay their version lip-service of some kind, as it was virtually impossible for film makers or their audience to have avoided any exposure to Disney's films.⁵²⁹

So, in some ways, the question of canon is more important than authenticity. And scholars are always arguing about canon—for good reason! Women are still underserved in academia, and “waiting for the works of women to become an accessible part of the [canon] is ongoing.”⁵³⁰ As demonstrated in Chapter Two, in the section on citation analysis, the resources cited on these websites is not unlike an undergraduate reading list in Classics. Every website's author read Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, very possibly the two most influential works in the canon of Classical Studies (and often considered part of the western canon as a whole).⁵³¹ In this one way, although their approaches to defining authenticity may differ, their work is not dissimilar to that of Classicists. They created educational resources, if not academic ones. These websites were written by people with expertise.

527 Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions, second edition* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2011), 69-92., 90.

528 Jack Zipes, “Foreword: Grounding the Spell: The Fairy Tale Film and Transformation,” in *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2010), xii.

529 Zipes, “Foreword: Grounding the Spell: The Fairy Tale Film and Transformation,” xi.

530 Therese Boos Dykeman, ed., *The Neglected Canon: First to the Twentieth Century* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 1999), xv.

531 Wikipedia Contributors, “Western Canon,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_canon.

These websites can do something most academic journals cannot—they can democratize the information they are publishing. These authors may create their websites as a leisure activity, not an academic one, but that means they are more likely to use approachable language, spreading their information (and their passion) to a much wider audience. Studying the ways they chose their sources—primary, not secondary, sources; no modern Creative Adaptations; authentic texts (e.g. early versions of a story and/or direct translations of specific works), perhaps in multiple translations—can tell us a lot about the way they think about the information resources they are accessing. Even if those choices are dissimilar to choices made by academics, it does not necessarily make them wrong or “ill-informed.”

Furthermore, these websites are not academic treatises. They are leisure activities, first and foremost, as well as adaptations. And adaptations can be as arbitrary and picky about their sources of inspiration as they like—just ask Fan Studies! Fans are always arguing about canon (did Han really shoot first?) with themselves, other fans, and even the authors of their source texts. “The fannish term 'canon' tends to be defined as the collection of texts considered to be the authoritative source for fan creations.”⁵³² In fandom, multiple sources must be considered such as deleted scenes (or other cut footage), spin-off series, tie-in novels, merchandise, advertisements, earlier versions of scripts, authorial statements (such as tweets or interviews), and more. Each of these elements may offer differing or even self-contradictory plot and characterization, so each fan must decide for themselves what counts and how it all fits together⁵³³—much like the contradictory elements and variety of source material for classical mythology! The authors of the websites are in good company and in good standing—it does not necessarily matter whether they

532 Kristina Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction: Literary and Social Practices in Fan Fiction Communities* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 101.

533 Busse, 102.

are academic sources, or how they choose the materials they are adapting. It is their choice to make as fans, adaptors, and leisure participants. The fact that they publicized their choices allowed those choices to be studied in the first place. Rather than ask “were their choices correct” it is much more interesting to ask “why did they make the choices they made?”

Translation as Adaptation

Each of the nine websites sampled cite English translations of works that would have originally been written in Ancient Greek or Latin. Only Atsma, Joe, and Marks acknowledge reading a work in more than one translation (although Marks does not have a site-wide bibliography). This is important, because translations introduce changes to a source text. It may be intentional, such as when *Notre-Dame de Paris*' title was changed by the English language translator to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and Victor Hugo, the original author, was very angry (because it de-centred the building and instead focused on a single character, implying it was his story).⁵³⁴ Or, in the case of most translations, a word or concept may not exist in the target language, forcing the translator to compensate or compromise the source text's meaning.

In Medusa's case, Marks helpfully provides four different translations of book 4 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁵³⁵ These include the Thomas More translation, the Dryden translation, the Mandelbaum translation, and the Humphries translation. We will take on the case of a single word in order to illustrate the ways in which a translator may accidentally, or purposefully, change the connotations of a text through word choice, therefore influencing the interpretation of who ever uses it.

⁵³⁴ Ellis.

⁵³⁵ Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

The word in question, in its original Latin, is “*vitiasse*.” It comes from the verb *vitio*, -are, or “to cause faults of defects in, spoil, harm, impair.”⁵³⁶ “The verb is used by other Latin authors as 'robbing of virginity, violating', as well as technical notions of 'invalidating' something (like an agreement) and of food 'going bad'.”⁵³⁷ This word appears in the context of its sentence: “*Hanc pelagi rector templo vitiasse Minervae dicitur*,”⁵³⁸ meaning “Her the ruler of the sea is said to have *despoiled* in the temple of Minerva.”⁵³⁹ This word definitely carries some negative connotations, although it should not be considered an exact mirror of the English word “rape.”

Lefkowitz's chapter on seduction and rape argues that Greek gods (and goddesses) do not rape mortals, but rather seduce them.⁵⁴⁰ These seductions are often classified as rape in modern literature, though the Greeks most likely did not think of them thusly, and that was reflected in their mythology.⁵⁴¹ The gods were depicted in art as catching the eye of a mortal—literally looking at them and being looked upon—and thus persuading the mortal, through their powerful gaze, to consent.⁵⁴² While Lefkowitz makes a solid case for a softer interpretation of many well-known myths where consent is questioned by modern readers, her chapter does not mention Medusa's plight at all. In Ovid's version (and many others) Medusa is a mortal who mates with a god (Poseidon) and suffers for it. While many maidens who had liaisons suffered because of it, Lefkowitz frames this suffering within the overall tradition of Greek myth: nothing in mortal life is an unqualified good; high moments come infrequently between long periods of suffering.⁵⁴³

536 Oxford Dictionaries, *Oxford Latin Dictionary, volume two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

537 This translation work was provided via email by Dr. Selina Stewart, one of the thesis committee members supervising this project. She is also a Professor of Classics at the University of Alberta. Her help is greatly appreciated

538 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.779.

539 This translation was graciously provided by Dr. Selina Stewart via email.

540 Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth, second edition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 54.

541 Lefkowitz, 56.

542 Lefkowitz, 73.

543 Lefkowitz, 80.

Within that context, “women who were seduced by the gods... will have her moment of glory to remember, her honor to enjoy throughout her life;”⁵⁴⁴ however, Medusa never gets another high moment, as she is cast out from society and is re-framed as a monster rather than a mortal. Perhaps this is due to her dual origins: either as maiden-turned-monster, or in earlier versions, always a monster and never a maiden, and thus not a victim of rape or seduction.⁵⁴⁵ Regardless, while “our present-day sensitivity to the treatment of women has made it difficult to discuss with anything like equanimity the ancient myths of divine abductions of mortals, even when we can separate them in our minds from ordinary rape,”⁵⁴⁶ it is important to note that the word *vitiassse* is not immediately equivalent to the modern understanding of rape, nor is it without negative connotation, and therefore presents a challenge to any translator who wishes to represent its meaning to an English-speaking audience.

More translates Poseidon's liaison with Medusa in a euphemistic way: “[he] attained her love.”⁵⁴⁷ Dryden is much more poetic in his approach: “he, lustful, stay'd, / And seiz'd, and rifled the young, blushing maid.”⁵⁴⁸ The use of the word “lust” rather than “love”, as well as more aggressive words such as “seized” and “rifled” indicate that this version is not interested in portraying a purely romantic seduction story, though it does not fully commit to the violence of the word “rape.” Including the term “blushing maid” may soften and romanticize the encounter, depending on the individual reader and their interpretation. Mandelbaum does not shy away from that word: “Her beauty led the Ruler of the Sea / To rape her in Minerva's sanctuary.”⁵⁴⁹

Humphries, too, uses the word rape as a translation of *vitiassse*, though he omits any reason for

544 Lefkowitz, 2007, 65.

545 Atsma, “Gorgones & Medousa.”

546 Lefkowitz, 72-73.

547 Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

548 Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

549 Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

the act: “One day Neptune found her and raped her.”⁵⁵⁰ This abrupt translation not only uses the word rape, but also signals the unwillingness of Medusa by omitting any reason given by Poseidon (such as his fascination with her beauty) and making it hard for any romanticization to be introduced in his version.

No single translation is exactly right. One would have to read the original Latin, and even then modern audiences lack the “structure of feeling” to fully understand Ovid's version in the way that his contemporaries would have.⁵⁵¹ Scholars can approach this understanding through thorough study of the culture and context surrounding the work, but there will always be a gap. Thus, both the more muted translations, such as More's, and the more abrupt translations, like Humphries', may be equally correct. It is through their comparison that patterns can be established and more solid facts can be disentangled from connotations. In all the translations, it is made clear that Ovid is most certainly referencing Poseidon as the other half of the encounter. That can be taken as a fact, and a steady similarity between all the translations. But the exact nature of his encounter with Medusa is murkier and up for interpretation. Of course, this is one word across only four translations of a single work. These uncertainties are multiplied across versions and translations, as translators are affected by their context and the purpose of their adaptation—a collection of Greek myths oriented at children is much less likely to use the term “rape” due to its violent meaning.⁵⁵²

550 Marks, “Medusa in Greek Mythology.”

551 Williams, 53.

552 Powell, 65.

Informing Medusa

So what can be gleaned about Medusa from the corpus? How do these websites present and prioritize the knowledge they gathered about her in their own research? How can their articles be understood as a source of information—as something that displays the ways in which belletristic fiction and poetry contain and circulate information? The table below isolates a selection of details common to the Medusa story. Not every detail is present in every story, and some present contradictory details. Yet each detail can be considered a piece of information that, taken together, shepherd readers to a robust understanding of Medusa as a mythological figure.

Table 23: Descriptions, Locations, and Relationships in the Medusa Myths

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
<i>Descriptors:</i>									
Snake-Hair	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wings	N	-	N	Y	-	N	Y	Y	N
Scary/Bulging Eyes	N	-	Y	N	-	N	Y	N	N
Brass Hands	N	-	Y	N	-	N	N	N	N
Tusks/Big Teeth	N	-	N	Y	-	N	Y	N	N
Vibrating/Lolling Tongue	N	-	N	Y	-	N	Y	N	N
Bearded	N	-	N	N	-	N	Y	N	N
<i>Locations:</i>									
Libya	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	N	Y
Sarpedon (Oceanus)	-	-	-	N	-	-	-	Y	N
Western Ocean (Mythical)	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	N	N
<i>Characters:</i>									
Perseus	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Athena	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Poseidon	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gorgons/Sisters	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y*	Y*	Y	Y*	Y

	G.org	GM	G.info	MM	MW	Paleo	Theoi	TiM	ToM
Pegasus	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chrysaor	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y

Note: a dash (“-”) is used to indicate there was no answer given on this topic, as opposed to an answer which did not include a specific element (indicated by an “N”). In cases marked by an asterisk (*), the Gorgons are not explicitly stated to be sisters/related to Medusa.

Without doing any interpretive work or making any attempts to use Medusa's myth as a mirror on ancient Greek society in order to learn more about the culture who begat the story (which is a form of information on its own), there are still basic examples of the information embedded in the myth that tell us about Medusa, her history, and her relationships with other mythological figures. We can see that Athena is indivisible from Medusa, as she appears in every article, which is not surprising as Athena is often identified in art by Medusa's head hanging on her shield (or aegis).⁵⁵³ Medusa's gorgon sisters are likewise tied to her story, which makes sense as Greek mythology is created from a web of interlocking family histories, making genealogy integral to its tales.⁵⁵⁴ Perseus, too, is absent from only a single article. This absence is somewhat surprising as Medusa is most famous for her death, and therefore her slayer is integral to her tale. Poseidon and Medusa's children, Chrysaor and Pegasus, come and go from her tale depending on the author's needs.

Even in the shortest of entries—Skidmore's entry is a bare 82 words!⁵⁵⁵—there is still a significant amount of information about the mythological figure of Medusa. This kind of analysis, this extrapolation of information even on such a base level, may help to elucidate what

⁵⁵³ Morford, Lenardon, and Sham, 180.

⁵⁵⁴ Powell, 65.

⁵⁵⁵ Joel Skidmore, “Medusa,” *Mythweb*, 2018, <http://www.mythweb.com/encyc/entries/medusa.html>.

exactly makes up a “core of collectively shared history and traits,” which is anchored to a name.⁵⁵⁶ It also helps to reveal how fluid those aspects can be, as individual adaptors innovate and move parts of a story around: snake-hair is obviously very important to the Medusa myth, as it appears on every site that gives any kind of description of Medusa or Gorgons in general; however, beards may be less important, as only Theoi mentions it as a descriptor. We can, like a kind of citation analysis, analyze these numbers to determine which elements are more influential, which are closest to the “core” of Medusa, which bits might most closely resemble the ur-myth in our collective imaginations. While a skilled adaptor may still subvert these in a satisfying way, it is likely that the more important the element that is changed, the more challenging it will be to get consumers to accept the change and still recognize it as belonging to the same story.

Contradictions

Certain aspects of the Medusa myth are more contradictory than others: her relationships with other mythological figures might exist in isolation, and her description might be a combination of elements which change through addition or subtraction, rather than substitution, but others, like her location, can not technically coexist. That said, Greek writers were wholly unconcerned with contradictions in their mythology, and, in the case of Medusa's home location, that uncertainty serves the story.

Perseus does not know where to find the Gorgons, and thus must consult the Graeae to find out where they live.⁵⁵⁷ If the readers already knew where Medusa lived, with exactitude and

⁵⁵⁶ Johnston, 394.

⁵⁵⁷ Powell, 332.

certainly, it might seem ridiculous that Perseus might not also have this so-called common knowledge. Having their location be in question—or, even better, mythological—keeps the readers in suspense and invested in the story. As Pontikis tells it, “The three Gorgons were said to live in the Western Ocean, in the vicinity of Night and the Hesperides,”⁵⁵⁸ referring to the goddess Nyx, personification of the night, and the nymphs of the evening, respectively. This is not only a mythical location but one that is poetic and impossible to pinpoint on a map, yet not obviously impossible to find—just keep sailing west, the story suggests, past the realm of men, and you will find the domain of the immortals.

Contradictions in different versions in a tale may not only serve the story, but also the culture from whence it came. No Greek myths have an agreed-upon version because “there was no text... with sacred authority and no organization... to establish an official version.”⁵⁵⁹ While poets and writers might claim divine inspiration, it was known that “they were capable of disseminating lies as easily as the truth: the gods were not a source of truth... the poets gave form to Greek myths but no one poet, not even Homer, could claim to promulgate an official version.”⁵⁶⁰ This served not only to democratize myth, allowing it to belong to everyone simultaneously, but could be linked to the mindset that gave rise to ostracism as a check on governmental power: in Athens, an annual unpopularity contest was held to exile any man who seemed too powerful as a way to prevent him from being a tyrant.⁵⁶¹ Not only could anyone write a myth, but no myth was allowed to become “official” no matter how popular it was.

⁵⁵⁸ Pontikis, “Medusa the Gorgon.”

⁵⁵⁹ Powell, 62.

⁵⁶⁰ Powell, 62.

⁵⁶¹ Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell, *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society, second edition* (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2010), 169.

But this mutability should not be confused for a lack of religiosity; myths are sacred tales that are handed down as a part of religious practice.⁵⁶² Just because the modern versions are not tied to an active religion does not mean they never were. Much of the surviving material about Greek mythology comes to us in the form of plays that were performed at religious festivals (most notably the Dionysian festival).⁵⁶³ They were, of course, a form of entertainment, but they were also a kind of religious practice: the writing of them, the performing of them, and the watching of them. So how could religion tolerate such variation in their sacred stories? I propose that these contradictions provoked thought on the part of the reader (and took thought on the part of the writer). By introducing inconsistent, yet complementary elements, readers were drawn to ponder the “plot-holes,” the different characterizations, and the layers of intertextuality in these myths in order to reconcile them with their prior knowledge. Art that has voids, stories that have holes, require the readers to contribute something of themselves in order to fill the void and finish the story. In essence, contradictory stories prompt thought and a deeper engagement beyond the passive absorption of mythological material.⁵⁶⁴

These thoughts might even be considered a kind of religious practice. Myths may have been flexible in the hands of Greek writers and poets for good reason.⁵⁶⁵ Take the plays of Euripides, for example. Euripides was famous for subjecting traditional myths to rigorous scrutiny and severe criticism.⁵⁶⁶ Ancient Greeks would go to one of these plays at a religious festival and would go home to ponder and discuss the arguments that it made. They might reflect on how it did or did not match the version of the myth they held in their head. As they thought

⁵⁶² Thury and Deviney, 4.

⁵⁶³ Powell, 64.

⁵⁶⁴ Frank Chimero, “Stories and Voids,” in *The Shape of Design* (Canada: Hemlock Printers, 2015), 85-96.
<https://shapeofdesignbook.com/chapters/07-stories-and-voids/>.

⁵⁶⁵ Powell, 333.

⁵⁶⁶ Powell, 65.

about those differences they would gain a deeper understanding of the story and the characters perhaps mutating their prior conceptions. This could easily be interpreted as religious meditation: the characters in question were theological figures, and the stories were sacred ones. Thus, these contradictory versions of a sacred story would prompt its contemporaries to meditate on religious elements, prompt them to have theological arguments, and bring their sacred stories into the every-day lives of lay people. Contradiction as an invitation to engage with the material; thoughts as religious practice.

Folklorists also deal with many contradictory versions of the same story in their discipline, although they may not be sacred, nor from a culture that encourages critical thought as a part of religious practice. This may not seem relevant to the study of Medusa at first; however, Folklore Studies and Classics have a lot of overlap, particularly in the case of Perseus. “Of all the Greek legendary cycles, that of Danae⁵⁶⁷ and Perseus is closest to folktale.”⁵⁶⁸

Perseus' own story follows closely the folktale pattern of the quest... A family member is threatened, the hero is sent on a quest, he acquires the use of a magical agent, he reaches his goal in a faraway land, he combats a villain, he is temporarily overcome, he vanquishes the enemy, he is pursued but escapes, he arrives home and is recognized, the villain is punished, and the hero is married and ascends to the throne. In the case of Perseus, Polydectes wants to marry Danae (*threat*), which leads to Perseus' boast that he will bring back the Gorgon's head (*quest*). The hat, sandals, *kibisis*, and scimitar make his task possible (*magical agent*). He reaches the river Ocean (*faraway land*) and beheads Medusa (*combat and victory*); conspicuously missing from this story is the hero's temporary defeat. The immortal Gorgons come after Perseus (*pursuit*), but he escapes. On Seriphos (*arrival home*) he proves his greatness by holding up the Gorgon's head (*recognition*) and petrifying Polydectes, whose name may tie him to Death's realm

⁵⁶⁷ Danae is Perseus' mother. Perseus' story often starts with her.

⁵⁶⁸ Powell, 339.

(*villain punished*). He frees Andromeda and takes the kingship of Tirnys (*marriage and ascent to throne*).⁵⁶⁹

What Powell is doing in the above quote is a kind of structural analysis, interested in breaking a story into its component parts, enabling it to be cross-compared with other versions, other stories, or other cultures' storytelling traditions.⁵⁷⁰ Vladimir Propp, a folklorist, pioneered the structural study of myth.⁵⁷¹ Another means of analyzing the structure of myths and folklore provides scholars with a way to stabilize a certain tradition or story without forcing a restrictive taxonomy or building an overly exclusive sample: by identifying the dynamic and conservative elements.⁵⁷² It is important to note that this is a bottom-up, after-the-fact approach. It is used to study versions of a tale or tradition *already in circulation*, not to circulate a top-down ruleset of what can or cannot be changed when adapting a particular thing: “traditions rarely die but instead are adapted to be meaningful to the groups practicing them.”⁵⁷³

As we saw with Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, in order to remain relevant a story must continually adapt as the group in which it circulates develops and changes.⁵⁷⁴ Thus, a story may be seen as a balance of elements that change and elements that stay the same; “dynamic” (changing) and “conservative” (static) features give a story flexibility while still maintaining a sense of continuity.⁵⁷⁵ The conservative elements are policed by a community rather than an individual⁵⁷⁶—it is at the moment that the group ceases to recognize a tale as part of a continuum that it becomes something else; instead of a version of an established story, it becomes a new

⁵⁶⁹ Powell, 342.

⁵⁷⁰ Morford, Lenardon, and Sham, 12.

⁵⁷¹ Morford, Lenardon, and Sham, 13.

⁵⁷² Sims and Stephens, 81.

⁵⁷³ Sims and Stephens, 81.

⁵⁷⁴ Sims and Stephens, 81.

⁵⁷⁵ Sims and Stephens, 81.

⁵⁷⁶ Sims and Stephens, 81.

story that may allude to a traditional tale. Thus, variation can exist—to a point—while remaining true to the original. This allows Medusa to become beautiful in the stories and art of the later Classical period, though she may have been hideous in the stories and art created during the earlier Archaic period, and still be considered the same mythological figure.⁵⁷⁷ “A myth participates in the cultural evolution of societies.”⁵⁷⁸

Adaptations and the Serious Leisure Perspective

I want to forward the notion that the practice of creating an adaptation could be examined using the Serious Leisure Perspective. A single core activity, in this case the act of creating an adaptation, could be located on multiple places on the SLP taxonomy depending on the behaviour of its participants. I expect adaptation to be categorized as part of the liberal arts hobby subset—potentially expanding the relatively underdeveloped list of ten sub-sections,⁵⁷⁹ or simply adding a new approach to studying the belletristic sub-section. The expression of their knowledge and interest in the field is likewise understudied,⁵⁸⁰ and I feel that creating adaptations might be a strong answer to the question “how do hobbyists externalize their knowledge of belletristic fiction and poetry?”—or as an example of project-based leisure. If creating an adaptation of a single work is the goal of the hobby, and it has a clear end-point, this might signify project-based leisure. If instead a series of adaptations are undertaken (as is the case with this corpus), or the study of belletristic fiction is prompted by general interest and curiosity, rather than the explicit goal of creating an adaptation, this may indicate a leisure career, and

⁵⁷⁷ Atsma, “Gorgones & Medousa.”

⁵⁷⁸ William Doty, “What’s a Myth? Nomological, Topological, and Taxonomic Explorations,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 86, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2003): 391-419. 397.

⁵⁷⁹ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 81-93.

⁵⁸⁰ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 85.

therefore provoke its classification under the liberal arts heading. Certainly the amount of research undertaken by the authors in the corpus indicates a level of engagement and devotion to these stories beyond the cursory.

Chapter One argued that these websites should be considered serious leisure. This chapter argues that not only are the articles on these websites a form of adaptation, but that adaptation itself should be considered a form of liberal arts hobby. If these websites—these adaptations—are an expression of knowledge, are not all adaptations? When fans write fanfiction or create other sorts of adaptations, they are expressing both their passion for and knowledge of a work—both elements of serious leisure. As was argued in Chapter One, belletristic fiction and poetry is not the only kind of fiction enthusiasts engage with. “Low-brow” fiction can have extremely devoted fanbases that read and re-read their source texts to find every new nugget of information, compiling them and putting them together on wikis, debating their contradictions with other fans, and writing thousands upon thousands of adaptations.

Adaptations would be a superb place to study devotee work. As discussed earlier in this chapter, aspiring television writers often start with speculative scripts as an audition piece, writing a new episode for the series without being asked or paid for it.⁵⁸¹ They generally write scripts for projects of which they are already a fan, but even if not, a great deal of research is often part and parcel of the process. Speaking more broadly: sequels, reboots, and remakes of various media including films, comics, and television are a ubiquitous part of our culture.⁵⁸² Certain properties are now old enough that the people in charge of the remake—sometimes spearheading those efforts themselves—are lifelong fans. J.J. Abrams loved *Star Wars* since he

⁵⁸¹ Breman.

⁵⁸² Simon Brew and Nick Harley, “121 Movie Remakes and Reboots Currently in the Works,” *Den of Geek*, November 20, 2018, <https://www.denofgeek.com/us/movies/reboots/248590/126-movie-remakes-and-reboots-currently-in-the-works> (accessed December 26, 2018).

was a kid⁵⁸³ (and never cared for *Star Trek*),⁵⁸⁴ and has since directed the reboot (as well as the reboot of *Star Trek*). Steven Moffat, “the original angry Doctor Who fan,”⁵⁸⁵ became the show-runner for several years. It is the era of officially sanctioned fan-made adaptation. I believe that studying a variety of adaptations (and adaptors) under the SLP would yield fascinating results, and perhaps lead to some remodelling of the taxonomy itself.

Concluding Remarks

In the spirit of bridging disciplines, Chapter Three continues the interdisciplinary work done throughout this thesis. It helps various fields find common ground in a specific corpus. It shows how important leisure activities are to leisure participants, and how important they should be to scholars. Leisure activities, such as the creation of these websites or various other forms of adaptation, are a major aspect of human life. They provide rich datasets that are ripe for scholarly inquiry for more than just scholars in the field of leisure studies. While this thesis posits all types of leisure as important and worthy of study, its main focus is the realm of storytelling and adaptation.

This chapter focused on the articles on these websites (using Medusa as a case study), exploring the ways in which they can be categorized as adaptations of the stories the authors came to know as a part of their liberal arts pursuit in the area of belletristic fiction and poetry; they are expressions of their gathered knowledge. This finding suggests that other types of

583 Bonnie Burton, “Director J.J. Abrams and his Lifelong Appreciation of Star Wars,” *Star Wars*, January 29, 2013, <https://www.starwars.com/news/director-j-j-abrams-and-his-lifelong-appreciation-of-star-wars>.

584 Ree Hines, “J. J. Abrams: I was never a huge fan of 'Star Trek,’” *Today*, October 14, 2016, <https://www.today.com/popculture/j-j-abrams-i-was-never-huge-fan-star-trek-1C9894533>.

585 Andrew Harrison, “Steven Moffat: 'I was the original angry Doctor Who fan,’” *The Guardian*, November 18, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/nov/18/steven-moffat-doctor-who-interview>.

adaptations, such as fanfiction or film adaptations of movies, might also be considered instances of serious leisure. Therefore, this chapter suggests that further research be done by leisure scholars into adaptors, their processes and finished projects, in order to continue to expand the SLP and produce insights regarding the intersection of devotee work and those jobs where adaptation is the expected outcome (such as film and television).

This chapter also provides ways in which to engage deeper with the *content* of the website, rather than just its production and presentation such as the examining how aspects of a mythological figure changes across each version of a story, or identifying the ways in which the translation used by an author might affect their understanding of a text. Chapter Two demonstrated that there are lots of ways to study the information behaviours of the authors and the ways in which they collect, evaluate, and organize information; Chapter Three shows that information also exists in the content of individual articles. This challenges Stebbins' assertion that it is hard to find information in belletristic literature.⁵⁸⁶ The extended examination of the sampled websites' articles on Medusa showed how the comparison of multiple adaptations can help to define the information at hand: illuminating which bits are relatively stable and which are dynamic and mutable. This demonstrated that contradictory information from multiple versions of a story can be dealt with in many ways. They can be ignored, rationalized as “inauthentic” versions of a story, or they can be embraced and studied as points of contention and arenas for discussion.

This chapter also compared academics to these authors, showing how they are not so different. These websites may not be considered academic sources due to their grammatical errors and lack of peer-review, but this chapter confirmed that their authors hold significant

⁵⁸⁶ Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 93.

expertise in the subject matter. They performed rigorous research and gave considerable thought to their content, reflected not only in this chapter but also the prior two: serious leisure is taken seriously by its participants. These authors may not be academics, but they do have expertise. Their work might be unpolished, but it is not worthless. As demonstrated in Chapter One, leisure is primarily enacted to reward the participant. If these authors benefitted from the process of creating their websites, from the process of expression, then that is enough. Users do not need to extract the same amount of value from these websites as their authors did in order to justify their existence. Furthermore, the approachable language, clear passion, and democratic approach to distribution (resources that are freely available to anyone with an internet connection, unlike a lot of peer-reviewed scholarship) mean these resources and their authors can reach a wider audience than is available to most scholars. They, and their work, are valuable.

CONCLUSION

“A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader.”⁵⁸⁷

- Roland Barthes, *“The Death of the Author.”*

Introduction

This research study collected a sample of nine single-authored websites of classical mythology in order to accomplish four things: first, this study used the serious leisure framework as a method of understanding the activities of hobbyists, as well as a method of demonstrating the importance of leisure activities to individuals and communities. Second, this study investigated the complex enactment of information behaviours by the authors as they proceed to create a website. This was done in order to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for the processes by which the sampled authors undertook their leisure activity. Third, this study examined other information phenomena involved in leisure pursuits—such as the sources from which hobbyists retrieve information, or the organizational systems leisure participants use and build when managing their collections of information—which are often overlooked by researchers, yet provide a unique method of engaging with the expressions of liberal arts hobbyists. Fourth and finally, this study positioned the content of these websites as synonymous with other forms of adaptation, opening leisure studies to the possibility of storytelling as a serious pursuit. This connection not only provides those studying adaptation with a framework that could provide structure to an interdisciplinary endeavour that crosses and is studied by a multitude of disciplines, but also

⁵⁸⁷ Barthes, 279-80.

encourages those disciplines to regard the activities of serious leisure as similarly important and worthy of study.

Revisiting the Research Questions

1. How do these websites, their content, and their creators challenge or support the theory of serious leisure and, more specifically, the leisure arts hobby expounded therein?

Overall, the creation of these websites was demonstrated to be an act of serious leisure. Evidence for each of the six distinctive qualities (The occasional need to persevere; Finding a leisure career in the activity; The application of significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, experience, or skill; Eight durable benefits or outcomes; A strong identification with the chosen pursuit; and a unique ethos embodied in a social world)⁵⁸⁸ was found, demonstrating that the SLP is both flexible and robust enough to cover an activity that happens primarily online, for which data was collected passively, rather than through contact with participants. This is significant because nearly all research done on serious leisure includes some form of participant observation or interaction in its methodology.

This study also lends plenty of support to the claims Stebbins makes about the personal dedication and attachment serious hobbyists display with regards to their chosen leisure activities. These websites were built over an average period of eleven and a half years. The authors mention the perseverance it took to discover, collect, read, synthesize, and present the knowledge gained over the course of their pursuit. Stebbins states that the core activity in liberal arts hobbies is the acquisition of knowledge which was certainly demonstrated by each author in

⁵⁸⁸ Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*, 11-12

the sample.⁵⁸⁹ These websites are important to the people who made them. They took dedication and perseverance to build. Stebbins' SLP signals very clearly that leisure activities are not always done frivolously. Leisure pursuits represent a significant portion of the human experience and they deserve to be considered important and worthy of study.

On the other hand, this study challenges some of Stebbins' ideas about liberal arts hobbies in general, and belletristic pursuits in particular. The ten sub-types of liberal arts hobbies (art, sports, cuisine, language, culture, history, science, philosophy, politics, and belletristic fiction and poetry)⁵⁹⁰ as listed in the SLP include a lot of overlap. Classical mythology could potentially span many of these sub-types, as it straddles art, language, culture, philosophy, and belletristic works. It is only due to the authors in our sample and their resistance to using any materials other than primary texts that this project could decisively locate their liberal arts hobby as belonging to the belletristic sub-type. Chapter One proposes two possible changes to these sub-types: first, they could be re-conceived a list of methods of engagement rather than topics of interest. Participants would all engage in the core activity of all liberal arts hobbies—pursuing knowledge—but they may also engage in one or more methods in order to facilitate their learning, such as travelling (to sports games, historical landmarks, museums, etc.), or expressing their knowledge (through talk or, as is the case in this study, creating an adaptation in the form of a websites), or reading. The second suggestion would be to do away with the sub-types altogether. There is so much overlap between the current sub-types that I am not sure they are serving scholars, and it is possible these arbitrary topics of study are preventing generalizations being made across sub-types, even though the actual experiences of participants might be very similar. Stebbins does

589 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 27.

590 Stebbins, *The Committed Reader*, 86.

acknowledge that liberal arts hobbies, their subtypes, and their expressions are underdeveloped areas of the SLP, so it is not surprising that it was this aspect of his taxonomy that was most challenged by—and challenging for—this research project.

2. What information phenomena are evident in the creation and presentation of these websites?

This project tackled the concept of information behaviour using Hektor's model of Information Activities. While this project was not able to deal with the model's intended level of granularity, it made use of the data available on the websites and collated several lists of information sources that were used by the authors. This project had to pair certain information activities together because, while it could be inferred that information activities were likely occurring with respect to the information sources in the relevant list, it was impossible to differentiate the paired activities using the methodology of this thesis. For example, participants must be enacting either *Search & Retrieve* or *Browse* activities when they visit the libraries mentioned on their sites in order to find relevant reading material, yet it is not clear whether they would always search for a specific book, browse the stacks, or do a combination of both. The same could be said of *Monitor* and *Exchange* activities that may have been occurring on newsgroups, message boards, and chatrooms. While the need to pair certain terms might seem problematic on the surface, it actually served this study fairly well. The combination of *Unfold* and *Publish* activities made for an elegant parallel with a discussion that was being had in Chapter One. Stebbins differentiates between the *gathering* of knowledge and the *expression* of knowledge that occurs as a part of liberal arts hobbies. This project challenges that notion; expressing (or publishing) knowledge

often goes hand in hand with receiving knowledge (unfolding). Synthesizing knowledge in preparation for its externalization often results in new insights. Adapting a text often results in a deeper understanding of the original.

Hektor's model enabled this study to gather evidence from each website with regards to the information activities these authors may have been enacting over the course of creating their websites. This method primarily provided a list of the information resources from which these websites obtained information, as well as places where the authors of these sites shared information (both on their websites as well as in other places on the internet). The identified locations and their related information activity or activities, are as follows:

- There was evidence for *Search & Retrieve* + *Browse* activities being enacted using the following general information resources:
 - Libraries (public, academic, and/or digital)
 - Search Engines
 - Archives (for both texts and images, largely digital in nature)
 - Bookstores (online and brick-and-mortar)
 - Encyclopedias (digital and physical editions, including Wikipedia)
- There was evidence for *Monitor* + *Exchange* activities being enacted using the following general information resources:
 - Newsgroups
 - Message boards/forums
 - Special clubs (and the events they host)
 - Online chat rooms
 - Other websites about classical mythology
- *Instruct* activities were enacted in the following places on these websites:
 - Lesson Plans
 - Citation Instructions

- Copyright Notices
- FAQs
- Articles on mythological figures
- *Publish* activities are demonstrated by the entirety of this corpus:
 - The websites are published publicly on the internet!
- *Unfold* activities are implied by the authors' consumption of:
 - (School) lectures
 - Movies & video games
 - The information resources they used to create articles on mythological figures
 - The works mentioned in their bibliographies
- Evidence for *Dress* activities was implied by the following:
 - The inclusion of images in the articles
 - The organizational style of the websites
 - The annotation of their bibliographies

Information behaviours were not the only information phenomena that was studied. The websites that these authors created are a form of information system: they store data and then communicate that data to the users who find it in the system's organizational schema.

Information Architecture provides a framework for investigating and understanding the decisions these authors made when creating their websites. The choices they made with regard to their website's organization system speaks to the way they organize that information in their head. A majority of these websites associate the mythological figure of Medusa with monstrosities. This is demonstrated by the hierarchical classification schema these websites implement; Medusa is filed under monster. The non-standardized nature of these systems reinforce this paper's argument about these websites: the primary goal of these authors is to find personal fulfillment

through their passionate dedication to a leisure activity; providing the best possible service to their user-base is a secondary goal at best.

The final type of information phenomena that was investigated as a part of this research project is the specific information sources that were being sought out by the leisure participants in order to construct their content. Studying their bibliographies—both site-wide and specific to their article about Medusa—provided this research project with data and a method of analysis. Bibliometrics can describe a collection of citations, demonstrating the preferences or biases of a group. In the case of these websites, a clear preference for primary sources was demonstrated. Few secondary sources or interpretive texts were listed as having been considered by these authors. Furthermore, applying citation analysis to these bibliographies allowed this study to collate a list of the sources that were most popular amongst these hobbyists. This list looked very similar to what an undergraduate Classics program might assign as a reading list. This affirms that the research being done by these liberal arts hobbyists is of an elevated level. It also supports Stebbins' assertion that academia and liberal arts hobbies are connected by the concept of devotee work.

3. How do broader ideas of storytelling and adaptation interact with information phenomena and the concept of leisure?

A deeper understanding of the process of reading (or unfolding, to use Hektor's terminology) demonstrates that one must find information in a story—or else how would one understand it? To unfold a text is to extract information from it, in pieces, and then fit those pieces together, relating them to themselves and to pieces found elsewhere (outside the text) in order to create

meaning for the reader. If there were no information to extract, there would be nothing to read, and nothing from which to make meaning. This process is amplified throughout the process of adapting a story. All stories are intertextual—they do not exist in a vacuum. Each story exists in the context of its author and the stories that came before. Therefore, to understand one story is to understand many stories. Pieces are broken off of the source material, tossed together with many other fragments (sourced from all aspects of life) in the minds of its readers, and then fitted back together with glue made out of the reader's insight. This is the process by which understanding is created.

If one is dedicated enough, as in the case of the authors of these websites, storytelling might be considered a serious leisure pursuit. This study demonstrates that the adaptations on these websites, in the form of articles about mythological figures, should be considered in and of itself an act of serious leisure. Expressions of knowledge are both a consequence of being passionate about a liberal arts hobby as well as a method by which one acquires new knowledge of the material being expressed. New connections are made, new insights are discovered, and new knowledge is created. New information systems are created. And doing so requires a complex interplay of information behaviours. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, these creators search, browse, and monitor a variety of information sources. They exchange information with their peers and communities of like-minded people. They instruct others on related topics, and are instructed, unfolding materials as they go. These materials are then dressed, and once they are prepared and organized, they are published. These behaviours are not only complex, but also recursive. At any point a person might realize they have a gap in their knowledge and begin to seek out information that might fill it. While exchanging information with a friend, they are

constantly publishing (i.e. externalizing) information, as well as unfolding (i.e. receiving) information. A student might interrupt an instructional session, prompting a reversal of roles if they begin to instruct the instructor, or a meeting of peers who exchange information on an equal footing. Hektor's model is a circle for good reason. There is no process of adaptation which is exclusively linear when it comes to information behaviours.

4. What can be learned about these websites and their authors' activities using a method that excludes participant interaction as well as any computer-aided data collection/analysis?

As demonstrated throughout the answers to the previous three research question, there exists a wide range of data that can be collected from these websites and developed into a robust work worthy of academia. These websites can be approached from a variety of angles. Even though there was never any interaction with leisure participants, the authors left enough breadcrumbs scattered throughout their websites that, taken as a whole, makes a strong case for why the creation of these websites should be considered a type of serious leisure. Studying the information behaviours of the authors was more challenging, but not altogether impossible. Approaching these websites as information systems that reflect the manner in which their authors conceptualize the information they then externalize through the website's organization and navigation systems provides an entirely different method of investigation. Furthermore, considering each article on these websites as an adaptation of a figure in classical mythology opens the door to a variety of methods from a wide range of disciplines that specialize in stories, storytelling, and adaptation.

The length and breadth of this thesis demonstrates that it is more than possible to perform

useful and significant work on these websites, even without contacting the authors or making use of computers. As documented expressions of a liberal arts hobby, the authors provide enough knowledge about themselves, their process, and their websites. The use of a customized rubric—designed with the help of multiple website and evaluation tools and tweaked throughout the process of data collection for the best results—provided structure to the data collection process and ensured each website was treated equally so that a systematic and robust comparison could occur.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, this type of work should not be considered impossible, and researchers who are interested in studying hobbyist websites (or other forms of documented serious leisure) but are unable to contact participants or make use of computers should not be intimidated, nor should they abandon their projects.

Contributions and Implications of Research

This research project is useful to scholarship in a number of ways. First of all, it provides significant context and description of the sampled websites. This provides a basis for future research: it enables scholars to craft relevant, targeted, and interesting questions should they decide to interview, survey, or otherwise observe similar situations (as in, websites created by hobbyists, particularly those interested in classical mythology). There is very little literature on the subject, and what exists tends to focus on studying the needs of the users rather than the authors, resulting in evaluative guides rather than qualitative understanding.⁵⁹² This research project begins to fill the gap, and advocates for a non-judgemental consideration of websites from the author's perspective, rather than always focusing on the user. These websites were very

⁵⁹¹ For more information on the rubric and the process behind its creation and use, refer to the methodology section.

⁵⁹² Duffy, 1074.

fulfilling exercises for their authors, regardless of the experiences of their users. Their value does not come from a dedication to providing excellent service to their users, but rather as an expression of self, and of knowledge, on the parts of these authors. They are sites of sentiment, rather than pragmatism, and that is perfectly acceptable.

This thesis also made an effort to expand the typical approach of scholars interested in the intersection of information phenomena and serious leisure. Whereas most studies focus on the information behaviours of participants, this study also investigated the information systems that were built by those participants, as well as the type and popularity of information sources they consulted. This approach strengthened the position of this thesis, demonstrating that the authors valued the process of expression over its reception by the public. The authors did address the concerns of their users in their “Frequently Asked Questions” pages on occasion, but this led to small fixes—Joe added a search engine to every major section of his page because his users did not understand his organizational schema and could not find the information they were looking for. Athena added disclaimers and told users they should take the information on her website with a grain of salt, rather than as fact—rather than prompting fundamental change.

Finally, this research project highlights certain issues with Stebbins' SLP, including the underdeveloped section of the taxonomy that focuses on liberal arts hobbies. The problems that this project encountered with regard to the sub-types of liberal arts hobbies was expounded upon in the previous section; however, another problematic aspect of Stebbins' taxonomy was highlighted in this research process. Stebbins excludes the reading of general fiction from his typology of liberal arts hobbies, including only belletristic works (or so-called “literature”) in his taxonomy. Stebbins therefore perpetuates the devaluation of certain fictional works which are

regarded as “low-brow” and therefore unworthy of time or attention. Chapter Three argues that people can engage enthusiastically with all kinds of works, regardless of perceived quality or importance—such as TV properties or pulpy novels—very passionately. They may wish to learn everything there is to know about a movie: the process of creating it, its influences and homages, the names and biographies of every actor, the thought process of every single minor character, etc. Fans take their source material *very* seriously, and should not be excluded from the liberal arts hobbies simply because those materials are not considered literature.

This devaluation of seemingly “frivolous” activities is mirrored in the way that academia often overlooks the colloquial aspects of daily life. Stebbins' SLP works very hard to demonstrate how important leisure activities are to its participants and advocates strongly for academia to treat the domain of leisure as worthy of respect and research initiatives. It is therefore saddening that he does not treat literature and popular fiction as genres equally worthy of respect and the attention of researchers.

Avenues for Further Research

This thesis finishes by providing a list of avenues of inquiry that I believe would build on the work done in this thesis and prove fruitful for future scholars and future studies. I hope it inspires scholars to do interesting work, and, in particular, interdisciplinary work. By exchanging ideas, methods, and concepts, one discipline can help solve a dilemma another discipline is having. Diversity of thought will always have a place in scholarship. It is the job of academics to reach out and talk to each other, collaborate, and find common ground. As this research project demonstrates, expressing knowledge helps one gain knowledge, and one never knows what

might be learned in a simple conversation. Though it can be a challenge to undertake, interdisciplinary work contributes to a simultaneously deeper and broader knowledge of the world in which we live.

The list of recommendations is as follows:

- A study could approach the same, or a very similar, corpus using a methodology that includes contact with participants. This might confirm some of the inferences made about the authors of these websites, as well as demonstrate the difference a change in methodology can make to the research questions and conclusions available to researchers.
- As the focus of this study was on the *authors*, a study on the *users* of these websites (or other hobbyist websites) might provide an enlightening counterpoint to this study, especially as users are likely to depict entirely different information behaviours and may also be enacting a form of serious leisure.
- This corpus might also be studied using computer aided data collection and analysis. This would drastically change the research questions available to researchers; however, it would not require researchers to select of sample of articles with which to work, allowing these large, amorphous websites to be studied as a whole.
 - It might also enable the study of these websites over time, possibly using tools like the Wayback Machine which archives snapshots of websites periodically. Doing so might reveal connected trends such as a possible rise of centralized information resources (e.g. Wikipedia) coinciding with a decline in single-authored topic-specific information resources.

- Very few studies have been done on websites from the point of view of their creators rather than their users. This perspective shift alters the metric of evaluation significantly. Instead of measuring the ease with which a user can find information relevant to them, this type of study would ask why the website creator decided to place that information there in the first place.
- Many more studies must be conducted on the understudied areas of liberal arts hobbies and their expressions. Stebbins suggests “talk” as a form of expression, and this study adds the creation of hobbyists websites to that list, but more forms of expression must surely exist. Furthermore, Stebbins acknowledges that the liberal arts hobbies section of the SLP taxonomy is underdeveloped. Future studies could help construct and adjust that model.
- Other studies might be done on adaptation as a kind of serious leisure, as I expect it is a core activity that might sit in multiple places on Stebbins' taxonomy depending on context. Studying adaptation as a form of project-based leisure might reveal interesting trends in the work of creating adaptations. In particular, this type of study might find that there are significant differences between fan-made adaptations and commissioned adaptations. It also might help elucidate the concept of devotee work: where is the line between pleasant and unpleasant obligation, and what effect does that have on the process of adaptation and its end product?
- More studies could be conducted that focus on information phenomena in leisure activities that do not consist of the participants' information behaviours. This would

include studying the information resources, systems, structures, and spaces used by participants, as well as the ways in which participants interact with those phenomena.

- The work done in this thesis on information architecture and bibliometrics demonstrate some methods by which information resources might be studied in the future, though further work could be done using either method.
 - A thorough investigation of the classification schemas of these websites, beyond the single mythological figure of Medusa, might illustrate broader trends in how hobbyists separate and categorize their knowledge about classical mythology. This may reveal that each site is extremely individualistic, or that they are fairly consistent with each other. If it is the second, these trends could then be compared to taxonomies created by Classicists. This might spark an interesting discussion and/or encourage scholars and hobbyists to interact and exchange knowledge with each other.
 - A bibliometric analysis of all of the articles on each website in this corpus could be undertaken. This might identify differences in core texts in academic circles versus those recommended and used by enthusiasts. Researchers could investigate which translations are most popular among hobbyists and compare those to the translations that are freely available online as part of the public domain in order to see whether the cost of purchasing a translation might be a factor in popularity.
 - Bibliometrics could be applied to every individual article on Theoi. Theoi's articles provide an exhaustive list of excerpts from ancient sources that refer to a

mythological figure, allowing researchers to quantify how frequently a figure appears in the mythological tradition, how their presence may wax and wane over time, and whether they are more popular with Roman or Greek authors.

- Another possible study is the analysis of participants' information management systems, for example their personal libraries or the manner in which they bookmark websites.
- Studying the culture and transcripts of online, hobby-specific chatrooms might result in interesting insights about information spaces, as well as providing researchers with an alternate method of investigating information behaviours without needing to interact with participants.

This list demonstrates that this study's novel approach could be built upon in a number of ways including reimagining its methodology, topic of interest, and scope. Furthermore, this list demonstrates the vast amount of research yet to be done on many aspects of leisure, highlighting leisure as a domain that may be of interest to many researchers from numerous disciplines.

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