



The Role of Research in Creative Writing: A Follow-up Study

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abstract: A previous study of creative writers' self-reports revealed important differences between research as it is carried out in the context of creative writing and the more scholarly types of research academic librarians often focus on. However, that study left many questions open. For this follow-up study, the author interviewed published creative writers about the role of research in their creative process. This study offers new insight into creative writers' attitudes toward the use of creative license. Though the sample was relatively small, the findings support the results of the original research.

Introduction

Creative works are not often thought of as products of research. At least, not in the same way that an academic paper or a scholarly article would be. However, there is evidence to suggest that for many creative practitioners, research is an essential part of their creative process.

Unfortunately, knowledge about what creative research looks like is difficult to come by. This is partly due to the difficulty in identifying creative practitioners, who are generally not tied together by a shared setting, such as a workplace or a school, the way other commonly studied populations may be. There can also be reluctance on the part of such practitioners to be studied.¹

Despite these difficulties, it is important for library and information science (LIS) scholars and practitioners to learn more about creative research practices. As self-proclaimed research experts, librarians should seek to have as complete a picture as possible of what research looks like in various contexts. Without that knowledge, librarians risk marginalizing research practices that do not fit in with their own views in ways that inevitably limit the value of our services and systems, especially our teaching.

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Working to better understand creative research is a large undertaking. There are likely to be important differences between the research practices of artists working in one genre or form and artists working in another. In fact, because of the idiosyncratic nature of creative work, two artists working in the same genre or form may have very different practices as well. To make matters even more confusing, a single artist's research process may change from one project to the next. These complicating factors do not fit well with the historical tendency of LIS scholars and practitioners (especially those working in information literacy) to sometimes want to boil the research process down into a set of basic teachable steps such as those found in the ACRL *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (The Standards)*, before they were replaced by the more nuanced ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (The Framework)*.²

The purpose of this paper is not to make broad statements about the nature of creative research as a whole. Rather, it is to represent a step toward understanding what creative research looks like in the context of creative writing and to identify important differences between creative research practices in this context and more familiar academic and scholarly research practices. This project began with the author's previous study of writers' self-reports.³ This previous study found important differences between creative research and academic research, including an emphasis on hands-on research and a reliance on the internet rather than scholarly sources. The current paper builds on this study through interviews with authors about their creative research practices.

Background and Connections to Information Literacy

Studies of information-seeking behavior are a foundation of scholarly literature in the LIS field. Knowledge about how different populations find, evaluate, and use information in various contexts is essential to the design and function of library services and systems. However, the information-seeking behaviors of creative populations remains

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an understudied area. Of the more than 1,000 articles published on the topic of information-seeking behavior in LIS journals between 2010 and 2022, fewer than two percent consider creative research in any form as their object of study.⁴ In a synthesis of literature on information behavior models, Tim Gorichanaz identified creative research as an area of future study.⁵

This is not to suggest that studies of creative research do not exist, only that they are relatively rare. The first such study was conducted by Susie Cobbledick who, in researching the information-seeking behavior of artists, sought to establish a framework on which future research could be built.⁶

William Hemmig's literature review of the information behavior of practicing visual artists supported Cobbledick's original conclusions, finding that such artists primarily conduct research in search of inspiration, to locate specific visual references, to build technical knowledge, to seek marketing and career guidance, and to learn about current trends in the art world.⁷



Hemmig and Cobblestick's focus on visual artists is echoed throughout much of the existing literature on creative research. Populations under study in such research include not just practicing artists but also art studio students, art historians, designers, craftspeople, visual arts scholars, video game design students, fine arts faculty, and studio art faculty.⁸ There are also occasional studies on the information-seeking behaviors of musical artists, such as in Ben Hunter's research on composers of electroacoustic music as well as Charilaos Lavranos, Petros A Kostagiolas, Konstantina Martzoukou, and Joseph Papadatos's efforts to build a conceptual framework for understanding the connection between musicians' information-seeking behavior and the creative process.⁹ Performing arts students in dance and theater have also been a subject of study, as have theater artists and dance scholars.¹⁰

Similar studies of creative writers are sparse, as Nadine Desrochers and Jen Pecoskie discovered in their literature review of writers' information habits, which found only 10 sources to work from.¹¹ In their findings, they state that a main barrier to further study is the difficulty of establishing the boundaries of the literary field in order to operationalize writers as a group for study.

Identifying practicing creative writers is only one complicating factor when it comes to studying information habits of creative writers. Another is a reluctance on the part of creative writers themselves to be studied. As writing scholar Douglas Hesse puts it, creative writers are "largely disinterested in (and occasionally contemptuous of) systematic research on writing and writers, especially empirical studies, trusting instead authors' own accounts as far more valuable than anything in the guise of a 'scholarly article.'"¹² The implication seems to be that creative practice requires a certain mystique, which systematic research would threaten to puncture.

This gap concerning creative research is present not only in the scholarly literature; it is also reflected in the documents that guide many information literacy instructors' pedagogical choices. As represented in the *ACRL Standards* and later *The Framework*, this instruction traditionally focuses on the practices and conventions of academic and scholarly research. This makes sense, given that information literacy is often taught in academic settings and for the purpose of helping students with their academic research. Though *The Framework* is chiefly concerned with research as it is practiced in an academic environment, it also acknowledges the importance of context to the research process in a variety of ways. This opens the door to teaching students how context can affect everything about the research process, from what sources are considered appropriate, to how those sources are evaluated, as well as whether and how credit is given.

In her past work, the author argued that information literacy instruction that considers the importance of context has a more lasting impact on students because it makes clear that research in one form or another is something that they will engage in throughout their lives, not only in academic contexts but also personal, professional, and creative ones as well.¹³

Teaching and learning about creative research specifically has additional potential benefits. Faculty and students in creative programs may have less of a relationship with the library because they feel their methods of doing research for their creative work are not reflected in traditional information literacy instruction. Opening our understanding of what research is and what it looks like beyond our narrow focus on academic



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conventions around peer-reviewed sources and formal citation could help us better communicate with and serve our more creative users.

More broadly, a narrow understanding of research that only takes into account academic and scholarly conventions risks marginalizing or delegitimizing practices and ways of knowing that do not follow these conventions. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses in her book *Decolonizing*

Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, this invites questions about what qualifies as “real” research and who gets to decide.¹⁴

With that in mind, the author in her past work defined research broadly as any formal or informal activity undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge, build on existing knowledge, or create new knowledge.¹⁵ Creative research is defined here as research that is undertaken to enhance a creative work. This creative work can be anything—a novel, a painting, a song, a photograph, and so on.

In her previous study, the author relied on self-reports in the form of books about writing and published author interviews in order to learn more about the role of research in fiction writing specifically. As the above quote from Hesse demonstrates, in lieu of empirical studies, these self-reports serve as an important source of information for creative writers seeking to learn about craft, both inside and outside the formal classroom. They also serve an important purpose from a scholarly perspective, representing the accepted lore among creative writers about how the creative process works.

The author consulted 31 books about writing and 188 published author interviews from sources such as *Writer’s Digest* and author Chuck Wendig’s *terribleminds* blog for evidence. It was found that creative research was mentioned in 45 percent of the writing books and 35 percent of the author interviews, though many lacked a detailed discussion of the actual research process. Despite this, the author was able to draw some preliminary conclusions about possible important differences between creative research and the academic, scholarly, and professional types of research studied more often. These differences included a strong preference for hands-on research and interviews with experts in order to lend authenticity to a story as well as the convenience of the internet as a source. Some authors also expressed ambivalent attitudes toward research, even going so far as to claim research could sometimes interfere with the creative process rather than aid it.

While this study provided important insight, it also left open many questions, particularly about how authors evaluate the information they find as well as their attitudes toward creative license and creative liberty when using research-related information for their works. The logical next step was to speak directly with authors to learn more about their research processes. This study was designed to be that next step.



Method

As stated earlier, a common challenge for research which seeks to understand the information-seeking behaviors of artistic populations is the difficulty of identifying and accessing these populations. Often, researchers rely on faculty and students in relevant departments on their campuses as a convenient proxy.¹⁶ While doing this can lead to interesting and important results, these studies generally do not adequately account for the possible differences in the information-seeking behaviors of artists and creative practitioners connected closely with a university and all of its resources and those who may not have those connections.¹⁷ In order to address this, the author of the present study made an effort to seek participants who were not necessarily affiliated with her own (or any) academic institution.

The Albany Book Festival is an annual event held by the New York State Writers Institute on the campus of the University at Albany, SUNY. Every year, the event features well-known writers of a variety of genres such as Susan Choi, Mary Gaitskill, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Joyce Carol Oates, and Francine Prose, and local and regional authors, who display their work in the campus ballroom. Some of these local authors happen to be current faculty, past faculty, or alumni of the university, but many are not.

This study's research began in early 2022. To identify possible subjects for her study, the author began with the list of local authors from the most recent Albany Book Festival, which had taken place in fall of 2021. Fifty-three local authors were on the list for the event. This list, which was created by the New York State Writers Institute, included the genres in which each author was most active. The present author used this information as part of the selection process for the study.

The previous study focused only on fiction writing. For this follow-up, the author decided to broaden her approach in the hopes of gaining insight into additional genres. Authors writing in genres which traditionally fall under the umbrella of "creative writing" (fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction) were included. Authors writing in straightforward nonfiction genres, such as local history and cookbooks, were not included. Any authors for whom current contact information could not be found were also excluded. This left 17 authors who met the selection criteria.

After receiving approval from the University at Albany Institutional Review Board, authors who met the inclusion criteria were contacted by e-mail with an invitation that described the research study and asked whether they would be interested in a short, informal one-on-one chat about the role of research in their creative work. The purpose of these informal chats was to build rapport with the authors and to more thoroughly introduce them to the nature and purpose of the research project in order to gauge their interest in participating in the formal study. It was made clear that none of the information from these chats, which were not recorded or transcribed, would be used as part of the research. Seventeen authors who met the selection criteria were contacted for an informal chat. Twelve agreed, and five did not respond.

Following the informal chat, potential participants were sent more detailed information about the study, including the role of informed consent. They were asked to review this information and indicate whether they might be interested in participating. Nine authors who participated in the informal chats agreed to formal interviews. Informed

consent was obtained from each participant. A tenth author expressed interest in participating but was ultimately unable to due to scheduling difficulties.

As part of the informed consent process, authors were given options for how they would like to be identified in the resulting study. The options were to remain anonymous, to be identified by a pseudonym of their choice, or to be identified by their real name (first or last name only or full name). All authors in this article are identified according to their preferences as indicated on the informed consent form (Table 1). The pronouns used throughout the article are also according to the stated preferences of the individual participants.

Table 1.
List of study participants

| Name | Genres | Current affiliation with author institution |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Janine De Tillio Cammarata | YA and middle grade fiction | No |
| Marina Antropow Cramer | Literary fiction | No |
| Tina deBellegarde | Mystery | No |
| Sarah Giragosian | Poetry | Yes |
| Laura Heffernan, aka Ada Bell | Romantic comedy, women's fiction, cozy paranormal mystery | No |
| Gertrude Katz, aka G. Katz Chronicle | Children's/educational | No |
| Jim LaBate | Literary fiction | No |
| W.D. Laremore | Paranormal romance | No |
| June Zuckerman | Historical mystery | No |

Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and focused on learning more about how creative writers find, evaluate, and use information as part of their research. An additional question regarding the use of creative license was included in order to gain insight into authors' attitudes about the practice of manipulating, eliding, changing, or ignoring factual information in service of a creative work. The interview questions used are included in Appendix A.

The nature of the interview process was such that not every question could be asked of every participant. For example, some participants were only able to give 30 minutes of their time rather than 60. Other participants were more elaborate in their answers to questions, which also posed a time constraint and necessitated prioritizing some questions over others. Finally, some participants included information in their answers to one question that also addressed another and so, for the sake of time, it was considered unnecessary to ask for information that had already been given. Questions that were



prioritized are highlighted in bold in Appendix A. Questions that are not highlighted were asked as time allowed.

Each interview was conducted and recorded on Zoom. The automatic transcription feature was used to create a transcript of the interview. The transcript was then reviewed against the recording in order to identify and correct inaccuracies. As part of the consent process, authors were told that the study's author might contact them for clarification. However, this step was not needed.

After the interviews were done, the transcripts for each were coded according to the themes identified based on the previous research. Several of these themes (topics of research, sources of information, and using information) gave further insight into findings from the earlier study. Others provided new information on the areas for further study identified in that article, including how authors develop their research process, how they evaluate information, and their attitudes and practices around creative license.

Results and Discussion

Information gleaned from the present study helped to support and enhance what was learned from the previous study about the topics authors research, their preferred sources of information, and how they use information and give credit. It also afforded further insight into occasionally ambivalent attitudes toward research and added new insight into how authors develop their research processes, how they evaluate information, and how they think about creative license.

Topics of research

As expected, the topics authors researched for their work were varied. The most frequently-mentioned research topics were historical in nature, often aimed at learning about period-specific details. For her historical novels, June Zuckerman described researching not only the historical settings for her stories located in ancient Alexandria but also details such as the flora and fauna found in the region at the time, building materials, food, and clothing. She also sought information on the locomotion patterns of a specific species of cobra. Janine De Tillio Cammarata's historical research included pirate activity in the United States for her middle grade novel and the details of Celtic hand-fasting ceremonies, clothing, and weaponry used by Pict and Scottish warriors in the 1300s. Marina Antropow Cramer talked about needing to find out whether a particular car model was available in the time period in which her novel took place and whether it would have a head rest—a relevant detail. Jim LaBate would search databases for information that would support his memories for fictionalized stories based on his own personal experience. W.D. Laremore investigated everyday objects from the 1940s to support a story featuring historical settings and time travel.

Research about setting that was not related to historical time periods was also a common theme. In addition to her historical mysteries, Zuckerman also writes horror short stories that take place in contemporary settings. For one such story, she researched the locations of hospitals in New York City in relation to a penthouse apartment she wanted to use as a model for her setting, as well as the types of surgeries each offered.

Laura Heffernan, who writes romance novels and women's fiction under her own name and mystery novels under the pseudonym Ada Bell, invented a fictional country for her romance novel by combining details about France, Great Britain, and Spain found through research. Gertrude Katz researched the real-life setting on which one of her books was based, which included a gift shop and hotel that would be featured in the story. For her mystery novels, Tina deBellegarde researched not only police procedures and relevant medical knowledge, but also Japan and netsuke, a type of Japanese artifact.

Research also helped enhance the more fantastical elements of authors' works. Cammarata researched the mythology of Atlantis for her middle grade novels as well as Celtic and Irish mythology for her adult novels. Heffernan talked about researching systems of magic, to gain ideas about what types of magic people can and can't do in a particular type of fantasy novel. For his own fantasy work, Laremore investigated mythology related to succubi.

Sarah Giragosian, the only poet included in the study, described her own research on invasive plants, raptor rituals, the science of extinction, octopus motherhood, and other issues related to wildlife and the environment which helped inform her poetry. She also spoke of research related to the senses, including scent.

The findings related to this theme confirm those from the previous study by showing how varied creative writers' topics of interest can be. It enhances those findings by showing that the areas of research are not only what readers might expect, such as overviews of historical time periods, but also smaller or more unusual details, some of which may be related to the more fantastical elements of a story.

Sources of information

The original study, which focused on fiction authors, found that these authors appeared to prefer hands-on research and interviews. There was some support for this in responses for the present study, both from fiction authors as well as writers from other genres. For example, deBellegarde talked about traveling to Japan, in part to visit a museum of netsuke artifacts to further enhance what she had already learned through internet and book research for a novel she was writing. Katz also spoke of visiting the real-life locations her stories would be based on to supplement what she had learned from internet sources.

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Cammarata, whose plans to travel to Trinity College in Ireland to conduct research for her Celtic mystery novels were disrupted by the pandemic, relied instead on online tours the museum posted. Giragosian also took advantage of efforts by museums and similar institutions to make materials available online. Still, she noted, "research requires touch," a sentiment Laremore seemed to agree with, speaking about his many trips to museums to handle objects and documents related to the historical aspects of his story. That said, Laremore and several other authors noted that

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handling primary documents is not without difficulty due to issues such as language or cultural barriers.

Some authors also talked about conducting both formal and informal interviews. DeBellegarde called on a neighbor with experience in the police force to check her facts on police procedure. Cammarata consulted with a friend experienced in martial arts and took sword fighting lessons for her creative work. Heffernan similarly referenced conversations with one friend who is a fitness instructor and another who is a nurse to help fact check and otherwise support information in her stories.

Cramer noted that interviews, while useful, are not without their pitfalls, especially when seeking more historical information. She noted that when interviewing someone about a personal experience, it is important to consider how memory changes and can be colored by emotion. Her opinion was that information gleaned from interviews should always be balanced with more factual information.

Though many participants mentioned hands-on research and interviews as a preferred method of research, the source that came up the most often was the internet. Authors described using the internet in a variety of ways, including locating reference images on which to base settings, characters' appearances, or characters' clothing. Cammarata used Pinterest to search for and organize images of forests to glean color and sensory details. Heffernan used images of royal clothing as references for her romance novels and watched clips of *I Love Lucy* online as part of her effort to learn more about grape stomping. Zuckerman also used paintings—found online, in books, or visited in person—to learn about the flora and fauna of the historical period she was exploring for her mystery novels. Laremore used the internet in a different way: to research a story idea to ascertain whether it was tenable before starting to write.

In the original study, libraries and scholarly sources rarely came up in writing books and published interviews. Libraries and archives were mentioned slightly more often in the interviews for the present study, perhaps because interviewees knew they were talking to a librarian and wanted to emphasize this aspect of their creative research. Zuckerman spoke at length about going to the New York Public Library to see English translations of historical Roman texts to learn about Roman leaders who would have been contemporaries of her historical characters. She also explained that her research often involved mining citations and bibliographies of sources that are particularly useful. Giragosian briefly mentioned using traditional research and scholarly articles to help inform her poetry. As a former instructor at a local community college, LaBate had access to library databases, which he used as part of his creative research.

These findings support those from the original research and add additional insight into authors' use of library resources as well as how their research processes, which often seem to favor hands-on research, may have been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Using information and giving credit

The original study found that fiction authors generally use information to build authenticity and avoid making factual errors. The findings from the current study supported this for the fiction authors as well as writers in other genres. Visual information helped fill in the gaps in the writers' imagined settings and in the backgrounds of the characters they wrote about.

Since not every piece of research will be able to fit into a story, poem, or essay, authors also sometimes need to make decisions about what outside information to use and what information to discard. Almost every author who responded to this question talked about keeping only the information that, as Zuckerman put it, "illuminates the story or moves the plot forward." Cammarata and Cramer both described these decisions as occurring mostly during the editing phase, when a draft of a novel had been written and needed to be trimmed down to its most necessary parts. Several authors, including Zuckerman, Giragosian, Heffernan, and LaBate talked about keeping deleted passages and research notes in separate files, perhaps to be used at a later time. For Giragosian, cutting information often helped to avoid including too much exposition in her poetry. Heffernan noted that decisions about what information to cut was less of an issue for her because "I tend to stop [researching] when I find what I need so I don't usually have a lot of extra."

The original study did not find much information about how authors choose to give credit to their sources. When asked about this, the subjects of the present study indicated that author notes and acknowledgments were the most common method for giving credit. Such practices were mentioned by Cammarata, deBellegarde, Giragosian, Heffernan, Laremore, and Zuckerman. However, many authors added that even then they would often not give credit to all the sources they had used. Instead, they would only acknowledge special sources or ones that had been particularly helpful, as when Cramer, who expressed a general belief that formal citations were not needed for fiction because it does not quote directly from sources, did sometimes use acknowledgments to highlight assistance from particular individuals as part of her writing process. This was also a good way to thank people they had interviewed or other experts and friends who had supported the creation of the work in some way. Cammarata, who did include a bibliography page in book one of her series, also talked about acknowledging sources in blog posts when discussing her creative research in that venue. Laremore mentioned including an historian's note or author's note—not necessarily in the book itself but in bonus content presented on a webpage or social media.

Ambivalent attitudes

The original study found that some fiction authors have ambivalent attitudes toward research, feeling it is a form of procrastination or that becoming too caught up in adhering to factual information can interfere with imagination, particularly in the early stages of writing.

No authors interviewed for the present study expressed similarly ambivalent or negative attitudes, likely due to the self-selecting nature of the study. Rather, the authors often spoke to the value of research to their creative work, even outside of the interview



question that specifically asked for this information. This value was often pinned to authenticity, realism, and the ability of research to make the writing richer. Research seemed especially important to authors whose work involved an historical element (including Cammarata, LaBate, Laremore, and Zuckerman), though it certainly was not limited to them.

That said, some authors felt that research only played a small role in their work. This was especially true of authors whose research was more casual in nature, involving little more than quick Google searches or conversations with friends. This speaks perhaps to the common conflation of “research” with more in-depth, formal, or academic activities. Even authors like Heffernan and deBellegarde, who claimed that they did not do much research for their creative work, were able to come up with examples that certainly qualify as research based on the definition being used for the study.

Development of the research process

An area of future study identified in the original work was the question of how authors develop their creative research process. One interview question in the present study focused on this specifically. Common responses included trial and error (deBellegarde, Heffernan, Giragosian, and Zuckerman) and learning from fellow writers (Cramer and Katz).

Some writers (Cammarata, Cramer, Giragosian, LaBate, Laremore, and Zuckerman) pointed specifically to their experience with academic or scholarly research, either as a student or professor, as a basis for their creative research practice. Though the tools and sources used were often different, this speaks to the transferability of at least some skills and concepts of academic and scholarly research to other contexts. It also further illustrates how successful researchers are able to adapt the practices of one context to those of another.

Notably, no writers mentioned learning about the practice of creative research from formal education, as in an academic creative writing program. However, Giragosian, who is a professor as well as a poet, did discuss a special course that she taught for several semesters on the role of research in creative writing. This illustrates a finding from the present author’s ongoing research into creative writing pedagogy, which shows that despite its importance to creative work, instruction in creative research is not a regular offering of most creative writing programs, though motivated individual instructors may choose to integrate it into existing courses or teach it as a special topic.¹⁸

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Evaluating information

Another area for further study is the question of how authors evaluate their sources and the information they find. This is an important aspect of information literacy teaching, which encourages students to apply critical thinking to the quality, content, and

provenance of the sources they use as part of their academic work. What this evaluation process might look like in a more creative context—and how important it is—was an area that required more exploration.

In speaking to the importance of evaluating sources for creative research, Cammarata stated, “even though it’s fiction...[it’s important to] make sure that what I’m using as sources are clear [and that] they’re credible and that I’m using the information properly.” To this end, though many of the authors spoke about using the internet as part of their research, many felt that formally published works were more authoritative or authentic. Several mentioned the need to either back up internet research with “more traditional stuff,” as deBellegarde put it, or to check information from the internet against other sources before fully trusting it. Heffernan also spoke about looking for corroborating information when encountering a mismatch between personal knowledge and what a source says, as a form of fact-checking.

Laremore expressed a strong preference for using primary sources over secondary sources, saying that secondary sources represent someone else’s interpretation of a topic whereas primary sources allow one to apply their own interpretation. However, Cramer also spoke about the necessity of exercising one’s own judgment when using first-person accounts because of the way these sources tend to be filtered through a particular point of view.

Creative license

Learning more about the application of creative license was perhaps the largest topic for further investigation identified in the original study. As stated earlier, creative license (also sometimes called creative liberty) is defined here as the practice of manipulating, eliding, changing, or ignoring factual information in service of a creative work. A well-known example is Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, in which Angelica Schuyler is portrayed as the unmarried oldest daughter in a family with no sons. In reality, Schuyler was married at the time she met Alexander Hamilton and had several living brothers. Miranda made a deliberate choice to ignore these biographical facts because he felt introducing a love triangle between Hamilton, Schuyler, and Schuyler’s sister Eliza made for a better story for his play.¹⁹

Such manipulation would be anathema to academic or scholarly research but it is common practice in creative work. The original study gave some insight into authors’ thinking about the application of creative license and its ethical considerations but the interviews conducted for this study presented an opportunity to ask authors about this topic directly.

Some of the authors claimed that they do not use creative license in their work. Zuckerman noted “I rarely take creative liberties” because “most of the stuff I use, I don’t have to”—meaning that the information she often seeks, including facts about historical flora and fauna, are well-documented so creative license is not needed. She also felt that taking creative license might negatively affect readers’ experience by interfering with the authenticity of a story. Cramer expressed similar views, saying that “reading fiction is an exercise of trust between the reader and the writer and if you violate that trust by being careless about your facts, about things that are verifiable, then you’ve lost the reader.” LaBate agreed, saying that a lack of accuracy can destroy an author’s credibility.



For Cammarata, creative license was in some ways fundamental to her book series about an elite band of warriors who existed in history but whose membership and practices would not have been open to a woman like her main character. However, she also stated that she generally avoided taking too much liberty with facts and information that readers might be able to easily research themselves.

Giragosian felt the creative license was similarly fundamental to her poetry, which often imagines the experiences of animals whose minds are unknowable to humans, but she also emphasized the sense of responsibility she felt in this area: “there’s...space for imaginative projection but at the same time I don’t—especially when I’m representing the so-called other—I don’t want to be irresponsible about the way they’re represented.”

Katz felt that creative license was also fundamental to her work as a children’s author, stating that the most important thing was to be engaging and as accurate as possible but that, in the end, “the flowers have to talk.”

Laremore and deBellegarde also raised the issue of respect and responsibility, particularly when it comes to fictional portrayals of historical figures. “I think we all [take creative liberties] ...because if we didn’t, we’d be writing nonfiction,” deBellegarde noted, adding that it was important to avoid taking liberties with anything that might “besmirch someone’s reputation.” According to Laremore, this is especially important for historical figures who may have families or relatives that are still living.

Interestingly, Heffernan noted that “I’m more likely to take license with something I know really well...because reality is kind of boring.” As an example, she offered her work in the law profession, saying that in portraying the functions of a court room, it was more important to be interesting than accurate because “[nobody] wants to read 20 pages of jury selection.” She added, “I’m more comfortable playing with stuff I really know, whereas if I don’t really know it, I feel like I have to prove that I do.”

Implications

As stated earlier, information literacy instruction—for a variety of reasons—tends to focus narrowly on the conventions and practices of academic and scholarly research. These conventions and practices include the use of peer-reviewed or otherwise scholarly sources. The content of those sources must be represented accurately to support an argument. The sources must also be cited carefully and correctly using formal citation styles.

As a follow-up to the author’s previous study, this research offers further support that creative research, as it relates to creative writing, follows much different practices and conventions. While it appears that creative writers do sometimes use scholarly or archival sources, their preference

is for hands-on research or interviews with experts. Even then, the information from the sources can be ignored or manipulated for creative purposes. And while some authors do include bibliographies or name key sources as part of their acknowledgments, this is seen as a courtesy rather than a requirement.

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Information literacy instruction that takes into account the contextual nature of research has a greater potential for lasting impact. It is also an ideal that is, given current models, not attainable for all or even most information literacy instructors. It is still important that as educators we do not treat the academic and scholarly conventions we most often teach as universal or overstate their transferability. Doing so is not only unrealistic, but—as this research helps to show—it also risks marginalizing or delegitimizing the research practices that do not follow these conventions.

Limitations

As stated earlier, studies of this kind often rely on a form of convenience sampling in which the researcher uses faculty and students at their institution as a proxy for creative populations, generally without acknowledging the impact a current affiliation with a university and its resources might have on the information behavior of those populations. The present author attempted to avoid this by drawing participants from a list of local authors presenting at a local book festival. However, it could be argued that there is some convenience in this sampling given that it only represents writers from the author's own local area or region—ones with enough resources of their own to be able to travel to and attend an event such as the Albany Book Festival.

Another common limitation of studies such as this is small sample sizes. This one is no different. The nine interviews described in this article represent a year's worth of work on the author's part. More could certainly be done. However, the interviews here seem to provide preliminary support for what was found in the original study, which included nearly 200 published author interviews as well as 31 books on writing.

That said, it should be acknowledged that the original study focused only on fiction writing while the present study included authors from a wider variety of creative writing genres. The findings even from interviewees who write in other genres appear to align well with the original research and provide additional, valuable insight. But it is important to note that it is not a perfect comparison and so the extent to which the findings of the present study could be said to support the previous one may be more limited than if the present author had chosen to once again focus only on fiction writing.

Conclusion

Studying creative research can be difficult for a variety of reasons. Despite this, it is important for library and information science scholars and practitioners to learn more about creative research in order to avoid delegitimizing these practices. However, working to better understand creative research is a big project. Given their idiosyncratic nature, it is impossible to make broad statements about creative research practices. Working toward a better understanding of what creative research looks like in various contexts helps make librarians and, by association, the research-related services and resources they offer, including instruction, more well-rounded. This study represents a step toward that goal.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Prioritized questions are in bold

1. Tell me a little bit about your writing and publication history and any projects you might be currently working on.
2. In general terms, what role does research play, if any, in your creative writing? If it doesn't play any role, you can say that that's the case.
3. How did you develop your creative research practice or methods? For example, did you learn about creative research in a classroom or workshop, from another writer, from a book about writing, develop it on your own, or some other way?
4. Keeping in mind that every project is probably different, at what stage or stages of the creative process do you typically engage in research?
5. How do you make decisions about what to research for a creative work? You can use a specific example or speak more generally.
6. What research methods or types of sources do you typically use? You can use a specific example or speak more generally.
7. How do you evaluate the quality of the information you discover in your research process?
8. What values does the information you discover in your research bring to your work?
9. How do you make decisions about what information to use and what information ignore or discard?
10. Do you typically acknowledge or give credit to your research sources in some way? For example, through acknowledgements or citations?
11. When using information from your research, do you ever take creative liberties with the information you find? If so, when and how do you use creative liberties?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me or any questions you have for me?

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each article was analyzed to discern the research context (academic, creative, personal, professional, scholarly, or scientific) to which the study related most closely, if any. The purpose of this research was to determine which research contexts LIS scholars have most often examined and to identify potential gaps. More information about this research is available on request.

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