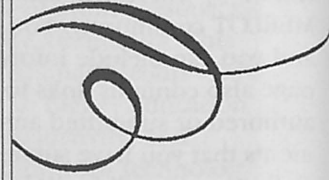


FRENCH DISSERTATIONS FOR AN AMERICAN RESEARCH AUDIENCE: EXPLORATORY AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

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Librarians intent on learning about or acquiring French doctoral dissertations for their research collections may wish to understand useful information regarding French doctoral research as well as some general characteristics of French doctoral dissertations. French doctoral dissertations form a unique culture which may present a terra incognita for American librarians and researchers. This cursory introduction to French doctoral grey literature in the humanities and social sciences attempts to offer an overview of doctoral dissertations that may be available for purchase as well as what has been collected by the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in their foreign dissertations collection. Several disciplines were chosen to offer reference and collections librarians a short, but instructive appreciation for students, researchers, and users interested in French subjects that may require the use of French doctoral dissertations. Communication and Information Science, Philosophy, and Art History and Archaeology were examined for their respective grey literature characteristics.

Researchers often use dissertations originating in other countries; often these dissertations reflect similar, but different characteristics than those encountered in American and Canadian dissertations. French doctoral dissertations and their particular evolution reflect a unique set of conditions, pertinent to those interested in locating, using, and referencing them. This examina-

tion attempts to provide a cursory but workable typology of dissertations, as well as examples of disciplinary relationships to three distinctive doctorates and their respective titular dissertation nomenclature¹. For American librarians and researchers in the humanities and social sciences, this holds particular relevance and intellectual significance. Doctoral dissertations occupy a unique position in grey literature. Often researchers and graduate students require doctoral dissertations for research; they may search for and acquire dissertations produced in the United States, or upon occasion seek dissertations that were written and defended in other countries. Language concerns aside, dissertations represent the most advanced formal research training and acculturation within higher learning². Internationally, the doctoral dissertation represents a standard of excellence generally accepted among international institutions and governmental agencies and research centers³. For American librarians and students investigating French dissertation research may prove daunting. They may find themselves seeking dissertations within a context unfamiliar, confusing. For this reason, a general discussion of French dissertation research and its nomenclature may prove beneficial.

FRENCH DISSERTATIONS

Today it is possible to search for French dissertations and even to acquire certain dissertations originating in French institutions of higher learning, especially

Cinema	History of Art & Archaeology
Ethnology	Linguistics
Arab-Islamic Studies	Literature & Civilization for all languages
Greek Studies	Management
Hebrew Studies	Musicology
Iberian Studies	Philosophy
Indian Studies	Prehistory
Latin Studies	Psychology
Regional Studies	Political Science
Geography	Semiotics
History	Theatre Studies

Table 1. Selected Disciplinary Orientations

universities. Currently most dissertations can be searched for through SUDOC (Système universitaire de documentation) the online database which supports the cataloguing of dissertations appearing in French institutions⁴. This bibliographic utility supersedes all paper versions of dissertations listings, but does not purport to include all dissertations that have been written and defended in French institutions. In terms of acquisitions, French dissertations are available for purchase by either individual or library from Atelier Nationale de Reproduction des Thèses in Lille, France⁵. American libraries, as well as individuals may acquire selected dissertations from 1971- present on offer and available from Atelier Nationale de Reproduction des Thèses. The proviso here is that not all dissertations are available, since only dissertation authors who wish to participate have dissertations published through this form of distribution. The catalog is a showcase of what is possibly pertinent and available to American librarian and researcher. Generally, French dissertations available through Atelier Nationale de Reproduction des Thèses in the humanities and social sciences fall under these broadly-based disciplinary rubrics (See Table 1.):

Within these disciplinary alignments, one finds various subfields or specialization useful to further searching of pertinent dissertations. Often, these

dissertations reflect close disciplinary orientation to the primary discipline, with possible interdisciplinary characteristics that may or may not be relevant to the users' needs. Philosophy, Communication and Information Science, and Art History and Archaeology were chosen as examples of disciplines and respective disciplinary subfields available for purchase (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). It is important to realize that not all dissertations that appear under these rubrics are indeed available.

In both disciplinary groupings and subfields, dissertations treat subjects that can be accommodated by the Atelier. Moreover, if purchase of dissertations is not possible, CRL based in Chicago, can offer a novel and important function for those requiring French dissertations⁶. CRL provides comprehensive access to foreign dissertations, in all disciplines and fields, especially European dissertations, including French dissertations. Approximately 17,000 dissertations are cataloged, but the larger collection of dissertations remains un-cataloged (approximately over 750,000) but available for users, via interlibrary loan. Also, if a request is made from one's home institution via interlibrary loan, CRL will endeavor to acquire dissertations for those they do not own. When a need arises for French dissertations, one can avail oneself of the

Aesthetics	Philosophy of science
History of and general philosophy	Contemporary philosophy
Logic, philosophy of language	Philosophy of religion
Metaphysics, ontology	Medieval philosophy
Philosophy of education, social sciences	Modern philosophy
philosophy of culture, anthropology	Moral, political philosophy
Ancient & classical philosophy	Pre philosophical thinking

Table 2. Subjects in Philosophy

Communication	Press, newspapers & magazines
General communication	Public relations
Audio visual communication	Radio, television
Written communication	Semiotics
Information	Methodology
Telecommunication	

Table 3. Subjects in Communication & Information Science

Ancient	African
Medieval art & Byzantine	Sculpture
Renaissance & Baroque	Painting
19 th & 20 th century	Photography
Pre-Columbian	Museums
Islamic	Collections

Table 4. Subjects in Art History & Archaeology

Atelier's services or through Interlibrary Loan at one's institution, for possible holdings at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. Whichever choices are made, French dissertations will offer another interesting approach to advanced research materials.

CONCLUSION

For collection librarians intent on acquiring French dissertations for their research collections, or for those who wish to use CRL's dissertation services as an additional off-site collection venue, knowledge of French dissertation culture, offers additional perspective, as well as a pragmatic approach to acquiring foreign, in this case, French dissertations. Necessarily cursory, this exploratory discussion seeks to frame French doctoral grey literature within the context of humanities and social sciences literature appearing in dissertation format. Availability of French dissertations at CRL and for purchase through the Atelier Nationale de Reproduction des Thèses in Lille offers American collection librarians, students, and researchers an opportunity to readily avail themselves of this rich resource in advanced research literature. Appreciation of French dissertations permits American librarians and researchers another resource for advanced research appearing in other venues. For those who are interested in French topics researched for French dissertations, the nature of such grey literature is invaluable. For collections and for interlibrary loan purposes, French dissertations represent another approach to research materials, especially for those individuals intent on pursuing French research subjects.

ENDNOTES

¹ Consult Raymond E. Wanner, *France: A Study of the Educational System of France and a Guide to the Academic Placement of Students in Educational Institutions of the United States* (New York: World Education Services & AACRAO, 1975): 116-123; A. Mariam Assefa, *France: A Study of the Educational System of France and a Guide to the Academic Placement of Students in Educational Institutions of the United States* (New York: World Education Services & A.A.C.R.A.O., 1988): 73-78.

²Among many sound historical analyses, see Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, ed. *Universities in the Middle Ages*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Sheldon Rothblatt and Bjorn Wittrock, eds. *The European and American university since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³ For a global study and history of the evolutionary development of doctoral programs and degrees within various national traditions, see P. G. M. Hesseling, *Frontiers of Learning: The Ph.D. Octopus* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986).

⁴ Consult the database at http://www.sudoc.abes.fr/LNG=FR/DB=2.1/IMPLAND=Y/CHARSET=ISO-8859-1/DB_START. Approximately, a critical mass of 10,000 dissertations are defended each year in France.

⁵ Consult the database at http://www.sudoc.abes.fr/LNG=FR/DB=2.1/IMPLAND=Y/CHARSET=ISO-8859-1/DB_START. Generally, the price for each dissertation is anywhere from approximately 30 Euros and above depending on the length, etc. A cursory perusal of such dissertations in Purdue's, Indiana University's and University of Notre Dame's holdings reveals 30, 61, and 142. Retrieved November 7, 2007.

⁶ See <http://www.crl.edu/>; for dissertations catalogue, see <http://www.crl.edu/content.asp?l1=5#dissertations>. Generally, academic libraries have borrowing privileges if they are members of CLR.

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