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Ron Geaves

## Editorial

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**Ron Geaves**

Department of Theology and Religious  
Studies  
Liverpool Hope University  
Hope Park  
Liverpool LS16  
UK

[geaves@hope.ac.uk](mailto:geaves@hope.ac.uk)

In my last editorial written for *Fieldwork in Religion* 5.1, I wrote about the Journal successfully establishing its identity in the field of religion during the first five years, and that the next five years would see it move from a young entry into the arena of study of religion's journals to a more middle-aged established position. As we move into the first volume (Volume 6) marking the transition I would like to take the opportunity to thank the contributions of Christopher Partridge and Andrew Dawson. Chris helped to found the Journal at its inception and shared in the vision that brought *FIR* to birth. Andy was instrumental in maintaining the quality of the first five years and ensuring that the processes of editing were maintained with painstaking exactitude. The Journal is indebted to both in assisting its early years.

It is a truism to say that religion has always been about media and communication. Those that have brought the possibility of human transformation through contact with transcendence have always been concerned with the means of reaching out to an audience. Our cultural heritage has been transformed by their contribution to communication, creating new forms of discourse, text and even languages. Contemporary religious forms are no less concerned with the media and our first three contributions to *FIR* 6.1 explore the transition of religion to contemporary forms of media, particularly to cyberspace and the implications for researchers and the methodologies employed.

Hanne Eggen Røislien explores social media as a “toolbox” for the study of religion, drawing upon her work as a researcher at the International Peace Research

Institute in Oslo. Empirically, her work has been focused on the Middle East, with a particular focus on Israeli settlements and the Israel Defense Forces. Her challenge had been entry into the world of male combat soldiers officially closed to outsiders, let alone a female, non-Israeli, non-Jewish and civilian researcher. She found the solution using the social media Facebook. Her article provides a methodological reflection on how Facebook's components comprised a toolbox that enabled 34 in-depth interviews with IDF soldiers in Israel. It is argued that Facebook represents a "Hub-Keeper," a generic term referring to three primary methodological functions: it is a Gate-Keeper that enables identification and recruitment of interviewees; it is a hub containing a variety of data; and, it is a Gateway for validation of data.

Rina Arya argues that contemporary art is a neglected arena of fieldwork in the study of religion, in spite of the centrality of art in communicating religious sentiments and experiences throughout time. Religion is also often disregarded in critical debates on contemporary art, and seen as irrelevant to modern life. Drawing upon her studies of the North American video artist Bill Viola to demonstrate the experiences of the religious that it can evoke, she posits that we can look to contemporary art to uncover notions about the religious in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century life. The essential questions remain the same "why are we here?" "Where are we going?" "What does it feel like to be alive?" She concludes that in post-secular Britain contemporary art provides a site to understand new religious understandings vis-à-vis the spiritual.

The third contribution by Stephen Pihlaja returns us to the world of cyberspace and YouTube. Utilizing membership categorization analysis, the article investigates category membership rules in a YouTube video made by a fundamentalist Christian in which there is differentiation between "saved" and "religious" users. The research findings demonstrate that categorization is accomplished by using recognized categories with ambiguous rules for categorization, familiar to "insider" users but highly contested in YouTube disputations.

The final article by Marta Dominguez Diaz returns us to a more familiar methodological terrain in the anthropology of religion but debated within the increasingly significant domain of the study of multi-sited locations in contemporary religious movements and the growing importance of the re-emergence of global Sufi movements in the study of Islam and Muslims. In her article "Shifting Field-sites: An Alternative Approach to Fieldwork in Transnational Sufism" she explores the challenges of carrying out ethnographic research among devotees of the transnational Qādiriyya movement. The article explores four themes: first, it examines how gender determined the scope of the research and circumscribed the possibilities of data collection. Second, it analyses some of the peculiarities involved in conducting multi-sited fieldwork in a transnational religious organization. Third, it

raises specific methodological concerns with regard to the often transitory nature of membership of the movement. Finally, it discusses how the researcher coped with religious proselytization. The article explores the processes of reflexivity through an examination of these four issues and concludes that it is through engaging with such ambiguities and contradictions that a more nuanced, real and less representational perspective can be achieved.