

**A GROWING WEB OF RESOURCES:  
THE ASSOCIATION OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES (ARDA)  
www.TheARDA.com**

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REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS RESEARCH 2007, VOLUME 49(1): PAGES 21-34

*Since going online in 1998, the goal of the ARDA has been to democratize access to quality data on religion without compromising the integrity of the information being archived. By the fall of 2006, the ARDA was archiving nearly 400 files, including the General Social Survey, Religious Congregations and Membership Study, Faith Communities Today, National Congregations Study, Baylor Religion Survey, U.S. Congregational Life Survey and many others. As our holdings have multiplied, the ARDA has increased its outreach beyond religion researchers. A growing number of tools, such as National Profiles, Maps and Reports, and QuickStats, allow the ARDA to be used as an online reference by researchers, the press, congregations, educators and others. This paper serves as a guide to the resources available on the ARDA. In particular we will focus upon our expanded international holdings, our online reference features, the ARDA's ability to serve as a virtual research center, and our intention to become a greater resource to educators via an online learning center.*

The American Religion Data Archive (ARDA) was designed to democratize access to data without compromising the integrity of the information being archived. Going online in 1998, the ARDA included 33 data files on American religion and received about 90 visitors each day. By the spring of 2007 the ARDA was archiving nearly 400 files, hosting over 8,500 visitors each day, and had more than 3,000 data files downloaded each month. Now including a growing international collection, the ARDA underwent a modest name change in 2006 (Association of Religion Data Archives) to reflect the ever expanding collection. But the goal of democratizing access without compromising quality remains.

Beyond expanding the data collection, the ARDA has increased its outreach to a growing audience by creating new tools for accessing and using the archive. We will highlight three areas. First, a growing number of tools (e.g., QuickStats, National Profiles, Maps, and Reports) allow the ARDA to be used as an online reference. From denominational history and heritage to profiles of nations around the globe, these tools unleash reference data for an online review. Second, the ever-expanding data collection and growing number of support features have turned the ARDA into a virtual research center for all. Online summaries and data analysis tools allow data collections to be assessed online, and the question bank allows for the quick construction of new surveys. The final area is our online teaching cen-

ter. Although still in the early stages of development, it has proven highly popular with well over 1,000 instructional modules downloaded each month.

This paper will review these three areas and explain how they can be used by those researching and studying religious groups. Before we begin this review, however, we offer a brief introduction to the informational foundation of the ARDA: the data archive.

## ABOUT THE ARCHIVE

The ARDA is first, and foremost, an archive of data collections on religion. From the well-known General Social Surveys and American National Election Studies to the lesser known surveys of specific denominations, the ARDA is especially rich in surveys on American religion. Indeed, well over 350 surveys are included in the archive. For each of these surveys, the ARDA provides detailed information on how the study was conducted. Online descriptions of the research design and sampling procedures allow for an immediate assessment of the data, and citations (often links) to publications on the data collection offer additional resources for a more in-depth review. Moreover, the full wording of each question is available online. The result is that the ARDA is an archive of survey questions and study details (meta-data) as well as an archive of data. Thanks to the support of the Lilly Endowment, the John Templeton Foundation, and the Pennsylvania State University, all of the data and meta-data are available for download from the ARDA free of charge.

Table 1 offers an outline of the major data collection categories in the ARDA and the number of data files archived under each category. The samples for the surveys vary widely, from the many national surveys to samples of church leaders, specific denominations, or local areas. Likewise, the topics of the surveys vary. Although all include measures of religion, some focus on politics and civic involvement, others on religious giving and participation, and still others address health, gender roles, worship life, and a host of other topics. Along with the many surveys of individuals, the ARDA also has surveys of congregations. The National Congregations Study, the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, and the American Congregational Giving Study all survey congregations from multiple denominations, with the U.S. Congregational Life project surveying members within the congregations as well. But the most heavily used file in the archive is the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS). During the final 6 months of 2006 the RCMS files were downloaded over 1,000 times.

In addition to archiving surveys in their entirety, the ARDA also assembles data from disparate sources to provide social measures for ecological units. For example, the Religious Congregations and Membership Study on religious adherents in the United States is combined with data on crime, voting, and basic demographics to allow for online mapping of regional patterns. The most ambitious effort at assembling ecological data, however, is the new cross-national data. Currently, a 103-variable file for virtually all major nations, this file will eventually swell to well over 1,000 measures. From data on religious adherents and state regulation to demographics and political activity, this file assembles data from many sources into one.

Finally, the ARDA is continuously adding to and improving the measures included in the collection. The most ambitious development for generating new data has been the coding of the *International Religious Freedom Reports* (Grim et al. 2006). This project will generate cross-national measures on religious freedoms and persecution, as well as a series of measures on the relationship between church and state. But the ARDA is not only generating new



**Table 1**  
**The ARDA Data File Directory**  
(Number of files archived in parentheses)

- International Surveys and Data (19)
  - Cross-National Data (1)
  - Multiple Nation Surveys (3)
  - Surveys of Single Nations (15)
  
- U.S. Church Membership Data (20)
  - Churches and Church Membership in the U.S. 1952, 1971, 1980, and 1990 (8)
  - Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2000 (2)
  - U.S. Census of Religious Bodies, 1890, 1906, 1916, 1926, 1936 (10)
  
- U.S. Surveys (313)
  - Surveys of the General Population
    - National Surveys (56)
      - News Polls (22)
      - General Social Surveys (5)
      - National Election Studies (3)
      - Other National Surveys (26)
    - Local/Regional Surveys (78)
      - Middletown Data (26)
      - Southern Focus Polls (6)
      - Other Local/Regional Surveys (46)
  - Surveys of Denominations/Other Religious Groups
    - Surveys of Members or Leaders (198)
      - Adventist (2)
      - Baptist (7)
      - Catholic (46)
      - Jewish (4)
      - Lutheran (8)
      - Methodist (3)
      - Mormon (2)
      - Nazarene (9)
      - Presbyterian (76)
      - Unitarian-Universalist (1)
      - Other Groups (31)
    - Survey of Congregations/Other Religious Organizations (46)
      - U.S. Congregational Life Survey (17)
      - Faith Communities Today (4)
      - Other Congregation/Religious Organization Surveys (26)

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data, it is also striving to improve existing measures. From developing indexes on religious regulation to accounting for the uncounted in the RCMS study, the ARDA continues to enhance existing data sources (Finke and Scheitle, 2005; Grim and Finke, 2006).

We should also note that the procedures used for placing data into the archive involve multiple checks for accuracy. When submitting data to the ARDA, the principal investiga-

tors are asked to submit a copy of the complete survey instrument and frequencies for each variable in the file. This allows the ARDA staff to verify the exact wording of each item and the accuracy of the data for each variable placed online. The goal, of course, is to have the online survey be identical to the instrument given to respondents and for the data to match the final file assembled by the principal investigator. Along with all files being reviewed by at least two ARDA staff members, the files also benefit from the scrutiny of the thousands using the ARDA each day.<sup>1</sup> This public scrutiny is especially helpful for features such as the denominational family trees reviewed below.

### AN ONLINE REFERENCE

The ARDA has recently developed a series of tools that allow users to review data without ever entering the archive directory or downloading data. Each of these tools is designed to be an online reference tool for researchers, educators, journalists, religious leaders, or anyone interested in religion.

#### *Deciphering the American Religious Mosaic*

Tracing the lineage, size, and membership trends of American religious movements is an onerous task. The endless cycle of mergers, schisms, and name changes, combined with the founding of groups without parentage, has formed the rich history of American religion. Yet, even scholars of American religion know only a small fraction of the religious schisms and mergers that form this religious mosaic.

The ARDA's online "Denominations" feature now provides information on the lineage and membership trends of over 400 denominations. By browsing through the major religious families, using the denominational search, or clicking on a denominational name on the family trees, users can quickly see how each denomination is related to other groups. Was it formed by a merger, did it split from another group, or was it founded independently? Once started, did it merge to form another group, did it generate more schisms, or was it ever renamed? Relying on the detailed work of J. Gordon Melton, Frank S. Mead, Samuel S. Hill, and others, the ARDA staff has retraced the heritage of American denominations and presented this information online in an easy to access format (See Melton, 2003; Mead and Hill, 2001). Our goal is to verify the heritage of denominations using two written sources. When two sources are unavailable, or when the sources are in conflict, we review denominational web sites and contact their offices directly. We have also benefited from the feedback of ARDA users such as Joel Thoreson (Archivist for Reference Services at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and Anne LeVeque (Research Specialist in Religion at the Congressional Research Service), who have helped to untangle some of the more complex family relationships.

The depth and quality of information provided on each denomination has been greatly improved by the support of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and J. Gordon Melton. Using the NCC's Historic Archive CD and recent editions of the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, the NCC data are given for denominational membership, churches, and clergy from 1925 to 2003. Melton not only provided a wealth of published information on each denomination, he also verified the accuracy of the family trees, and provided brief descriptions for most of the denominations online. This cooperation resulted in more accurate and detailed denominational comparisons over time. The open, public nature of these denominational profiles will ensure their continued improvement and accuracy.



### ***Profiling Nations***

The World Factbook and the United Nations are rich sources of data for countries and territories around the globe; yet, their data on religion are noticeably sparse. By contrast, the annual International Religious Freedom Reports are filled with information about religion, but they offer almost no numerical values for the many topics covered. The ARDA's National Profiles offer multiple measures (including measures of religion) and provide numerical codes for each. These Profiles include data on religious adherents, religious freedoms, demographics, and other socio-economic measures for each nation and region.

Drawing on the ARDA's large cross-national data file mentioned earlier, the National Profiles assemble disparate sources of data into a single location. As shown in Figure 1, the pages include data, maps, and descriptions from the World Factbook and the United Nations. These highly regarded data provide a political, economic, and social profile of each nation. In addition, adherent estimates from the World Christian Database offer an overview of religious affiliation in the nation. Together they provide some of the best data available on each country.

But these profiles do more than assemble existing sources of data, they offer new measures. Based on a detailed coding of the International Religious Freedom Reports by the ARDA staff, indexes of religious regulation are computed for nearly every nation in the world.<sup>2</sup> The indexes include "Government Regulation," "Government Favoritism," and the "Social Regulation of Religion" (Grim and Finke, 2006).

We recently completed a major update of the National Profiles. A new "Public Opinion" section aggregates survey data from the World Values Survey to offer nearly fifty religion-related measures. All available years of data are provided for each country in the survey. For example, using the Public Opinion tab, a user can find that belief in Heaven increased in Mexico from 70% to 88.1% of the population between 1990 and 2000. Or users can find that, in 1999, 16.2% of the Russian population believed that books attacking religion should be banned. Further, we have added the ability to directly compare any two nations or any two regions on all available measures. We are continually developing new measures and additional features in order to provide a more complete religious profile of each nation.

### ***Maps and Reports: Exploring the U.S. Religious Economy***

Our most popular reference tool remains the Maps and Reports feature, using the Religious Congregations and Membership Survey (RCMS) collected by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB).<sup>3</sup> The RCMS data offer the most complete church membership enumeration available by counties, states, and the nation, including data for 149 U.S. denominations in 2000.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the goal of the RCMS is to approximate a census of American religion. The Maps and Reports feature provides instant profiles and visuals of this useful data source.

The Reports feature allows users to view change in religious groups between 1990 and 2000 for the entire United States, or for single states, counties or metro areas. For example, the U.S. report reveals that relatively conservative religious groups such as the Assemblies of God (+18.5%), the Presbyterian Church in America (+42.4%) and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (+36.2%) experienced sizeable percentage gains in membership between 1990 and 2000. In contrast, mainline Christian denominations such as the Episcopal Church (-5.3%), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (-1.6%), and the United Church of Christ (-14.8%) continued their decline. Additionally, the reports reveal that some of the groups

**Figure 1**  
**Summary Page for a National Profile of Uganda**

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Data Archive
National Profiles
Maps & Reports
QuickStats
Denominations
Learning Modules
About
Related Sites
Question Bank

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## Uganda

International > Regions > Eastern Africa > Uganda

Summary

Background

Religious Freedom

Religious Demographics

Largest Religious Groups

### Uganda

Region: [Eastern Africa](#)

2006 Population<sup>1</sup>: 31,367,972

Land Area<sup>2</sup>: 146,556

Life Expectancy<sup>3</sup>: 47.3

Per capita income<sup>4</sup>: 1,457



Compare to:

### Indexes<sup>4</sup>


GRI: Government Regulation of religion Index, 0-10, low is less regulation 3.9

RFI: Government Favoritism of religion Index, 0-10, low is less favoritism 0.0

SRI: Social Regulation of religion Index, 0-10, low is less regulation 5.1

### Largest Religious Groups



- Christian (88.96%)
- Muslim (5.35%)
- Ethnoreligionist (4.02%)
- Hindu (0.80%)
- Non-Religious (0.50%)
- Other (0.37%)

### History

Uganda achieved independence from the UK in 1962. The dictatorial regime of Idi AMIN (1971-79) was responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 opponents; guerrilla war and human rights abuses under Milton OBOTE (1980-85) claimed at least another 100,000 lives. During the 1990s, the government promulgated non-party presidential and legislative elections.

Sources

Note: All country profiles, maps, and flags are taken from [The World Factbook, 2006](#).

1. The U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base (IDB) is a computerized data bank containing statistical tables of demographic data for 229 countries and areas of the world.
2. The U.S. State Department's [International Religious Freedom Report](#) is submitted to Congress annually by the Department of State in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. This report supplements the most recent Human Rights Reports by providing additional detailed information with respect to matters involving international religious freedom. It includes individual country chapters on the status of religious freedom worldwide. A dataset with these and the other international measures highlighted on the country pages can be downloaded from this website. These State Department reports are open source.
3. The [United Nations Human Development Reports](#) provide data and statistical analysis in various areas of human development. The Human Development Report (HDR) presents two types of statistics: the human development indicator tables, which provide a global assessment of country achievements in different areas of human development, and thematic statistical analysis. A dataset with these and the other international measures highlighted on the country pages can be downloaded from this website. Used with permission.
4. The article by [Enzo Grim and Roger Fiske](#) describes the coding of the U.S. State Department's [International Religious Freedom reports](#). This variable was coded from the reports for 2003. Under their supervision, additional years of the reports are currently being coded by researchers at the Association of Religion Data Archives. Smaller countries not covered by the State Department Reports were coded by researchers at the [World Religion Database](#) under the supervision of Todd Johnson, drawing on information from Oxford Press's [World Christian Encyclopedia](#). A dataset with these and the other international measures highlighted on the country pages can be downloaded from this website. Used with permission.

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experiencing the largest percent declines in membership were a combination of small Evangelical groups such as the General Six Principle Baptists (-85.5%) and ethnic groups such as the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (-53.9%).

Data on religious membership may also be viewed in a visual format using the Maps feature. Users can map the total churches, total adherents or total adherence rate per 1,000 population for any of the 149 denominations and for various groupings, such as Evangelicals, Mainliners, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Orthodox and those in "other" religious groups.<sup>5</sup> Maps are available at the state and county-level.

In addition to religion data, the Maps feature includes hundreds of other variables, such as demographics from the U.S. Census, voting information, and crime data. Once viewing a map, the user can scroll down the page to create a second map on the same page. This allows a simple, visual examination of the relationship between religion and another variable of interest. A correlation coefficient is also provided in order to determine if the relationship is statistically significant. For example, a user could examine the relationship between religion and types of crime, discovering that religious adherence (as measured by rates of adherence to all denominations per 1,000) is not related to the violent crime rate ( $r = -.129$ ), but is associated with lower property crime rates ( $r = -.284^{**}$ ).

Future versions of Maps and Reports will also integrate historical data on church membership. The ARDA currently disseminates membership data for 2000, 1990, 1980, 1971, 1952, 1936, 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

### ***QuickStats***

One of the most recent additions to the ARDA is QuickStats, a feature that allows website users to quickly locate and analyze religion data from several of the site's most popular surveys. This feature brings together, in one location on the website, data from nationally representative surveys like the General Social Survey, the American National Election Studies, and the Baylor Religion Survey. If someone is interested in knowing what Americans believe about the Bible or angels or how often Americans attend religious services, they can find that information easily using QuickStats. Rather than searching hundreds of surveys for variables of interest, users can now access data by simply selecting topics of interest. From a menu of topics, organized into larger categories such as religious affiliation, beliefs, behaviors, experiences, attitudes, and politics, users get results with a single click. Table 2 illustrates the organization of the main QuickStats menu.

Once someone selects a topic from the menu, the site then generates an introduction page and a series of easy-to-read tables and graphs that allow the user to perform basic analyses. The introduction page generated for each item gives the user the complete wording of the original survey question and a brief description of the survey from which it is drawn. Additionally, the introduction page includes a pie chart that shows how survey respondents answered the question, with frequencies and percentages given. Figure 2 is the introduction page for religious service attendance. Notice that from the introduction page, website visitors can navigate to various tables and graphs by selecting from a set of labeled tabs.

If someone wants to know how various demographic variables such as race, gender, and age are related to an item like frequency of religious service attendance, they can select the "Patterns" tab and view a series of crosstabs revealing those relationships. Doing so, a user will find that a smaller percentage of men (15.8%) than women (20%) report attending religious services weekly. For many topics, users can also view how answers have changed over

**Table 2**  
**QuickStats Main Menu**

**Attitudes**

About Moral Issues  
About Religion and Politics  
About Religion/Spirituality  
Toward Certain Groups

**Politics**

Iraq War  
Party Identification  
President Bush  
Social Welfare Spending

**Religious Affiliation/Identification**

Denominational Affiliation  
Religious Preference  
Religious Tradition  
Strength of Affiliation

**Religious Experiences**

Desire to be Closer to God  
Experience Connection to All of Life  
Feel God's Love Directly  
Feel God's Love Through Others  
Feel God's Presence  
Feel Guided by God  
Feel Joy That Lifts  
Feel Peace and Harmony  
Find Comfort in Religion  
Find Strength in Religion  
Has respondent had a "born again" experience?  
Touched by Beauty of Creation

**Religious Behaviors**

Asking for God's Help  
Belonging to Church Related Groups  
Evangelizing Friends  
Frequency of Prayer  
Reading Sacred Texts  
Religious Service Attendance  
Table Prayers

**Religious Beliefs**

Belief in Angels  
Belief in Demons  
Belief in Ghosts  
Belief in God  
Belief in Heaven  
Belief in Hell  
Belief in Monsters  
Belief in Satan  
Belief in UFOs  
Beliefs about Jesus  
Evolution  
Is God angered by human sin?  
Life After Death  
Origin of Man

time. For instance, QuickStats shows how the number of people who say they attend religious services weekly or nearly weekly has changed. A graph revealing these trends can be accessed by selecting the "Over Time" tab from the introduction page. The QuickStats feature also allows users to compare data from various national surveys that have asked similar questions. For instance, if a question has been included on both the General Social Survey and the American National Election Studies, users may view results from both surveys by selecting the "Other Surveys" tab. Not only has this innovative feature made data available for clergy, journalists, and others without research backgrounds; it has made the data more accessible for all.

In the near future, QuickStats will also assemble various denominational data from across the ARDA. Selecting a single religious group such as the Southern Baptist Convention will generate a page providing access to a series of data sources. Information on the history and



Figure 2  
Introduction Page for QuickStats Items

ARDA  
The Association of Religion Data Archives

Search: Data Archive [ ] search

Data Archive National Profiles Maps & Reports QuickStats Denominations Learning Modules About Related Sites Question Bank

### Religious Service Attendance

QuickStats > U.S. Surveys > Religious Beliefs >

Introduction [ ] [ ] [ ]

### Religious Service Attendance

How often do you attend religious services? (General Social Survey, 2004)

Religious Service Attendance (General Social Survey, 2004)

1) Never	471 (16.8%)
2) Once a year or less	594 (21.2%)
3) Several times a year	371 (13.2%)
4) Once a month	191 (6.8%)
5) 2 - 3 times a month	255 (9.1%)
6) Every week or nearly every week	677 (24.2%)
7) Several times a week	242 (8.6%)

Notes

General Social Survey, 2004 (General Social Survey) Item 211. Each national survey in the QuickStats feature included a representative sample of 2,000 citizens in a near-equal split—half female and half male. In addition to gathering detailed demographic information on respondents, the GSS gathers opinions on a wide variety of public issues. At the time of publication, the GSS had published 1,000 issues on public opinion in public institutions, and a host of other. Of course, these items are publicly accessible to users completing a survey in order to gather data on a global range of issues. The GSS has adopted the practice of rolling groups of questions into sections of the survey in alternate years.

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heritage of the group, membership trends over time, a national map of membership rates, and a list of surveys on this group will all be listed. The number of topics and survey questions included in QuickStats will increase significantly as more of the ARDA's holdings are integrated into the feature.

## A VIRTUAL RESEARCH CENTER

The ARDA allows researchers to download hundreds of different datasets related to religion, and to view the appropriate documentation free of charge. But the ARDA also provides online services that allow researchers to conduct preliminary assessments and analyses of archived data, as well as design and construct new questionnaires. Each of these features strives to build a virtual research center for supporting the work of those interested in the study of religion.

### Research Transparency

A hallmark of good scientific work is transparency—the ability for others to discern one's methods and replicate one's results. The ARDA's status as a public resource reinforces the

transparency of research in the study of religion. Each study included in the data archive includes full details regarding its collection, weighting, methodology, sampling, and survey design. Moreover, online frequencies or means are available for every item in every study (with the exclusion of alphanumeric items) and the investigators and/or institutions that collected the data are credited. The ARDA also makes it possible for researchers to download the same data sets that others have used in previous studies in order to replicate analyses and build upon previous studies' findings. Finally, the collection of religion surveys allows researchers easily to compare how differences in methods, samples and question wordings influence the results.

### ***Examining Question Wording***

The ARDA is more than an archive of quantitative data—it is also an archive of survey questions. Every survey archived on the ARDA includes the full question wording used when that survey was administered. This allows users to see how other researchers have worded survey items and, perhaps more importantly, to examine how question wording impacts response patterns. This can be helpful for researchers examining a particular religious topic using an existing data set, as well as for researchers constructing new questionnaires for use in future studies.

For example, someone interested in studying how often Americans participate in private devotional activities such as prayer or scripture reading might want to begin by examining the ways that national surveys have asked respondents about these practices in the past. A review of recent surveys archived on the ARDA reveals that questions dealing with frequency of Bible reading have been asked in a variety of ways in recent years and have resulted in different response patterns. In 1998, the General Social Survey asked respondents how often they had read the Bible during the past year. Approximately 20 percent said that they read the Bible several times a week or more, while 42 percent indicated that they had not read the Bible at all. In 2000, the American National Election Study asked a slightly more specific version of the same question: "Outside of attending religious services, do you read the Bible several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week or less, or never?" National Election Study respondents indicated levels of Bible reading that were similar to that of General Social Survey respondents. Just over 27 percent said that they read the Bible more than once a week, and 38 percent said that they never read the Bible. In 2005, however, the Baylor Religion Survey asked a sample of Americans a more inclusive question: "Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you read the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book?" While including other sacred texts in the question's wording did not inflate the number of respondents who indicated reading a sacred text frequently, as might have been expected, it did result in a much smaller percentage of respondents who indicated never reading one. Only 24 percent of respondents to this question said that they never read sacred books. Previous survey items that asked only about reading the Bible failed to measure the scripture reading of non-Christian respondents. The online codebook, QuickStats, and other areas of the ARDA allow researchers to quickly compare item wording and the responses across surveys.

### ***The Question Bank***

Although archives are typically associated with secondary data analysis, the ARDA is also a resource for designing new research. Because all survey questions and the responses



are readily available, the ARDA offers a trove of information for constructing new surveys. Previous survey items can be evaluated online and selected items can be saved for future use.

The online "Question Bank" tool is designed specifically to help researchers construct new surveys. After reviewing and assessing various survey questions, selected questions can be added to a "Question Bank" where they can be revised and saved as a text file. For example, if you find a question that you like, either as the result of a search or by viewing a codebook, simply click the "Add to Question Bank" button that appears under every survey question. This saves the item to your personal Question Bank. You can save as many questions from as many different surveys as you want. You may view your Question Bank at any time by either clicking on a "View Question Bank" button, which also appears under every survey question, or by clicking on "Question Bank" in the menu at the top of the screen. Once viewing the Question Bank you can remove unwanted items, print the current questions, or view them as plain text. Users who wish to save a permanent version of their Question Bank, accessible whenever they visit the ARDA, can choose the "Save Question Bank" option.

### ***Online Research Analysis Tools***

In addition to the aforementioned Maps & Reports, the ARDA includes a host of features that allow for quick, online analyses. These features are useful both for exploring the data available in the archive and for instructional use. To quickly perform a basic analysis of any categorical survey item, click on the "Analyze results" link that appears under variables in codebooks and search results. This will show the frequencies for the selected variable, along with a pie chart. You have the option of changing the pie chart to a bar chart or a cumulative bar chart if desired.

Further, the ARDA staff has flagged key demographic variables in every survey in the data collection and recoded those variables if necessary for ease of use. When you analyze a variable, the "AutoAnalyze" feature automatically performs a cross-tabulation between the selected variable and appropriate demographics. For example, selecting frequency of prayer (variable #132, PRAY) from the General Social Survey 2004, will display frequencies for this variable and a pie chart. Below this will be cross-tabulations of frequency of prayer by gender, race, religion, age, church attendance, political ideology, education, and age. This allows users to quickly determine that females pray more frequently than men, African-Americans more often than whites and so on. The ARDA will soon allow users to create their own customized cross-tabs by selecting both the row and column variables.

## **AN ONLINE LEARNING CENTER**

In addition to supporting researchers, the ARDA serves instructors seeking to improve education on religion and religious leaders striving to learn about the religious makeup of their communities. Indeed, the online reference tools and data archive have been developed with these goals in mind.

Over the past year, however, the ARDA has introduced online modules that guide students and religious leaders. For example, the ARDA has developed tutorials, or *learning modules*, for exploring its rich trove of information. Each module consists of a series of instructions and questions that help students explore a topic of interest with the best data available. Although designed for classroom use, the learning modules provide an interesting exploration for anyone. These topic-driven exercises review the religious landscape of

the United States, delve into American evangelicalism, and explore religion's relationship with crime, science, sexuality, politics, and other topics.

A related tool, the Community Profile Builder, walks users through building a profile of the social, educational, economic, and religious characteristics of an area. As part of the process, users are introduced to resources both on and off the ARDA site, such as the ARDA's Reports for completing a local religious profile and the U.S. Census for retrieving rich demographic data. The Community Profile Builder is a useful classroom exercise for teaching students about their community, but the targeted audience is religious leaders learning about the community their organization serves.

During the next two years this learning center will significantly expand in two key areas. First, the number of learning modules and the range of topics they cover will continue to swell. Thanks to the recent release of the "Pulpit and Pew Survey of Pastoral Leaders" we can now develop a learning module that helps college students and seminarians to better understand American clergy. Our new international data allow us to introduce students to religious life, beliefs, and behavior around the world. We will also expand our target audience of students. A few modules will be designed for high school and junior high school students and some modules will use religion data to offer instruction in research design.

A second area of expansion will be our introduction of GIS data and mapping.<sup>6</sup> Although designed to support religious leaders using our Community Profile Builder, the new feature will be of immediate interest to educators. Still in the design phase, the goal is to allow educators, as well as religious leaders and researchers, to receive a demographic profile for any area in the U.S., and to present this profile with maps or tables. When combined with RCMS data on church membership by county, any ARDA user can develop a detailed profile of their area.

Finally, we hope to supplement these structured modules and new features with learning materials developed by the ARDA staff and others. For example, Christopher Bader is now developing simulation modules that will illustrate the importance of social networks in explaining the growth of religious movements.

## CONCLUSION

Since going online in 1998, the ARDA has continued to add to its data holdings and to develop new features for researchers, journalists, educators, congregations, and the general public. In addition to the improvements noted above, we plan many upgrades over the next two years. For example we will add several dozen topics to the QuickStats feature, expand the data archive with a particular focus on the international collection, improve our mapping features, add GIS data and software, expand the information included in our National Profiles feature, and add several new learning modules.

As we continue to expand our services, we ask for your advice and input. We have developed several avenues for getting feedback. Along with asking students, colleagues, journalists, and pastors for feedback (both informally and in focus groups), we have set up several group settings for watching others use the site. Yet, some of our most valuable feedback has come through emails from our regular users. Email us at [feedback@thearda.com](mailto:feedback@thearda.com) to offer your suggestions for improvements, ideas for new features, or to note any errors or software glitches you find.

We also call on researchers who have collected their own data to submit these data to the ARDA's collection. Visit the ARDA website to learn about the process of data submission.



Further, if you are aware of a data source related to religion that is not on the ARDA, please inform us of those data and we will attempt to add them. Finally, if you have developed a teaching resource that utilizes the ARDA website and would like to share it with others, please let us know. We will post new resources to our learning center and will credit the author(s) submitting the resources.

The ARDA staff greatly appreciates the support given to the site by researchers, educators, religious leaders, and journalists over the past eight years. With your help, we will continue expanding the web of resources.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The majority of the files in the ARDA have been downloaded over 100 times each. Hence, even the lesser used files benefit from this public scrutiny.

<sup>2</sup>The reports are not complete for at least three countries: North Korea, Libya, and Bhutan. Because the U.S. State Department did not have an official presence in or access to these countries during the reporting period, the reports did not have the same access to information. Also, there was no report for the United States. The State Department does not report on regions under the control of the United States.

<sup>3</sup>The 1990 data collection was managed by Martin B. Bradley, Norman M. Green, Jr., Dale E. Jones, Mac Lynn, and Lou McNeil. Dale E. Jones, Sherri Doty, Clifford Grammich, James E. Horsch, Richard Houseal, Mac Lynn, John P. Marcum, Kenneth M. Sanchagrin and Richard H. Taylor supervised the collection in 2000. The results are published by the Glenmary Research Center ([www.Glenmary.org](http://www.Glenmary.org)).

<sup>4</sup>The sponsors invited all religious bodies that could be identified as having congregations in the United States to participate. Final totals include information from 149 Christian and other religious bodies. Participants included 139 Christian denominations, associations, or communions (including Latter-day Saints and Unitarian/Universalist groups); two specially defined groups of independent Christian churches; Jewish and Islamic estimates; and counts of temples for six Eastern religions. The 149 groups reported 268,254 congregations with 141,371,963 adherents, which is 50.2% of the population of 281,421,839. There are 14 non-participating religious bodies that reported more than 100,000 members to the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, 2000, including all historically African American denominations. These groups reported a combined membership of 31,040,360 in the *Yearbook*, which is not reflected in the congregations and membership data. The lack of African American denominations should be noted when referencing the number of total adherents or denominations in an area.

<sup>5</sup>"Others" include: Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Church of Christ, Scientist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Hindus, Jains, Jewish, Muslims (estimate), Sikhs, Taoists, Unitarian Universalist Association and Zoroastrians.

<sup>6</sup>While this feature is under construction, the Church of the Nazarene Research Center has graciously allowed us to direct traffic to their "Neighborhood Demographic Report" feature.

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