

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

1-2022

Investigating Religious Education Students' Awareness and Use of Theological Commons for Term Paper Writing and Research: Implications for Improving Students' Research Skills

Leonard Chidi Ilechukwu

University of Nigeria - Nsukka, leonard.ilechukwu@gmail.com

Christopher Eje Ogar

Federal University Otuoke Library

Ndubuisi Eze Chukwu

University of Nigeria - Nsukka

Faith O. Mesagan

University of Nigeria - Nsukka

Theresa Olunwa Oforka

University of Nigeria - Nsukka

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Ilechukwu, Leonard Chidi; Ogar, Christopher Eje; Chukwu, Ndubuisi Eze; Mesagan, Faith O.; and Oforka, Theresa Olunwa, "Investigating Religious Education Students' Awareness and Use of Theological Commons for Term Paper Writing and Research: Implications for Improving Students' Research Skills" (2022). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6717.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6717>

**Investigating Religious Education Students' Awareness and Use of Theological
Commons for Term Paper Writing and Research: Implications for Improving Students'
Research Skills**

**Leonard Chidi Ilechukwu¹, Christopher Eje Ogar², Ndubuisi Eze Chukwu³, Faith O.
Mesagan⁴, Theresa Olunwa Oforka^{3*}**

¹Department of Arts Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

²Federal University Otuoke Library, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

³Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

⁴Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State

***Correspondence:** Theresa Olunwa Oforka, Department of Educational Foundations,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State (email: theresa.oforka@unn.edu.ng)

Abstract

The study investigated religious education students' awareness and use of theological commons for term paper writing and research in the federal universities in southeast Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate 96 male students and 86 female students. The statistical analysis was done using an independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of this study showed that there is no significant difference in the awareness of theological commons among religious education students for term paper writing and research by gender. The finding of this study also showed that there is a gender difference in the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students. It was recommended that there should be seminars and workshops to intensify the use of theological commons among the students for term paper writing and improved research skills.

Keywords: Awareness, Religious Education Students, Students' Research Skills, Term Paper Writing, Theological Commons

Introduction

Term paper writing and research have remained a fundamental task among students in tertiary institutions across the globe. It is an activity established by institutions used to assess the students' creativeness and ability to contribute meaningfully in proffering solutions to problems plaguing their society (Odu, 2018). In other words, term paper writing and research can be used as an indirect tool for building societal status and credibility which could have a spillover effect on the globe (Nwakpa, 2015). Term paper writing and research according to Odu (2018) is a systematic process of inquiry geared towards proffering solutions to real or imagined issues. Contributing, Hornby (2015) opined that the term paper writing and research is a thorough study on a subject matter with the view of finding out recent facts or information about it. Operationally, term paper writing and research is an academic activity born out of curiosity to search for the unknown and expand knowledge.

The attainment of this noble academic activity by students requires the acquisition of basic research skills and assistance (Odu, 2018). The students need both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable them to carry out successful term paper works and research (Dien & Bassey, 2019). Corresponding, Obot (2014) noted that the intellectual skills needed for term paper writing and research include: problem formulation; hypothesis formulation; literature review; design of the investigation; sample selection; instrument design, validation, and data collection; selection and assessment of appropriate statistics; interpretation of results; and discussion of findings. These intellectual skills according to Moyo (2017) are facilitated through effective teaching and the availability of information resources such as academic libraries.

Most tertiary institutions' academic libraries, for example, are working on ways to help their users access material in the most efficient way possible. According to Amjad, Ahmed, and Naeem (2013), the introduction of information and communication technologies

(ICTs) has had a significant and good impact on this endeavour. This has usually resulted in the addition of "Digital Library materials collection" to libraries (Moyo, 2017). Libraries' content is no longer limited to conventional printed resources like books, magazines, or journals, but also includes internet resources and other electronic-based materials (Yebowaah & Plockey, 2017). The use of electronic library resources makes it easier to improve their research skills and perform productive research. Electronic library resources make it easier to provide accurate information to a wide range of users, support collaborative research activities, make use of communication network capabilities, and enhance knowledge development and dissemination.

Fundamentally, students of all tertiary institutions need this advanced collection of resources for effective term paper writing and research, however, the very nature of the different courses of study makes the need for this digital library vary remarkably specifically among Religious education students. Religious education students are students understudying various beliefs, doctrines, myths, customs, rites, and personal roles obtainable in the world system (Ishiaku, 2019). The academic study of religion is multidisciplinary, drawing upon approaches from history, literary studies, philosophy, and the social sciences. It is multicultural, exploring the beliefs, practices, and developments of particular religious communities in many different cultures. The critical study of religion fosters the education of mature and responsible citizens (The University of Central Florida, n.d.). Furthermore, this area of discipline hopes to uncover the implications surrounding these belief systems, explore their place in history and society, and connect these pertinent points with different areas of everyday life. Theological Commons (TC) is a virtual collection of information resources to provide its users with the best available digital theological resources that are available (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2021). NBST (n.d.) describes TC as a digital library of electronic books, journals, and other resources which equips its users with virtual access to

digital copies and upgraded books of many volumes currently located in major seminaries and university libraries globally. The TC makes use of the World Media Share library platform (WMS). Other seminaries and universities employ a similar system. The basic idea of a digital library is to provide universal access to digitized information throughout the world (Kumar, 2016).

The observed low motivation, discrepancies in the organization of work, scanty information, and hiring of project contractors reveal that religious education Students are bereft of necessary research skills for term paper writing and research. This could be a result of the lack of awareness and use of the available theological commons. The Digital Theological library plays an important role in improving research skills among students of religious education because it houses extensive resources such as e-books, e-journals, e-periodicals, e-articles, and e-bibliographies among others (Patra, 2010). This author reiterates further that DTL provides a learning atmosphere for students as well as an outstanding research environment. E-books have useful characteristics that can engage and prepare researchers more deeply than traditional books. E-book capabilities improve students' ability to highlight, sketch, annotate, journal, and cite sources.

Many students expand exploration patterns that may help them complete term paper and research work through following instructions given in the digital materials. Theological commons according to Cothran (2011) plays an important role for students; through building robust digital collections for students' consumption. Additional research has revealed that the nature of Libraries and materials available changes the trends in how students engage with and interpret resources which are an important aspect of research skills (Gilbert, Knutson, & Gilbert 2012; Liu & Luo, 2011; & Ouellette, 2011). However, these authors showed student libraries play an active role in improving learning, growth, and interpretation of research materials by assessing the particular needs of their student population. This invariably curbs

citation and plagiarism problems encountered by students in the cause of research work. This has resulted in the advancement of electronic theological information resources, such as computers and the Internet, to facilitate the use of theological commons. Access to library services via electronic means is critical for this group of users. According to Adams, Kings, and Hook (2011), one of the most important factors in students' academic achievement is the availability, awareness, and use of electronic resources.

Awareness is defined as knowledge about a certain piece of information demonstrated through a specific activity (Akpojotor, 2016). Awareness, according to Oni and Ahiauzu (2008), is knowledge of the existence of something or actual insight of a situation or issue based on information or experience. It can also be defined as an understanding of a situation, fact, consciousness, recognition, realization, grasp, and acknowledgement of a well-informed interest or acquaintance with a specific situation or development. Given the advantages of TC, awareness, and usage of these resources must be realized, for users to meet their information, research, and learning needs. The use of TC does not only benefit library users; it also allows the library as a whole to understand its mission and assess the value of investing in these resources (Calland & Diallo 2013; Srinivasulu & Balu, 2019). Institutions can profit from investing in electronic library resources if their users have the information literacy skills to make effective use of the resources (Ukachi 2015).

Several studies have inconsistent reports on the awareness and use of digital libraries by undergraduates (Obande et al., 2020) In a survey by Akpojotor (2016) on awareness and use of electronic library services in universities, respondents indicated their awareness of the existence of e-library services. The frequency of e-resource usage in the University for Development Studies Library was reported in a study conducted by Yebowaah and Plockey (2017) on awareness and use of electronic resources in university libraries. Only two respondents (7.7%) utilize the Library's e-resources once a week, whereas four respondents

(15.4%) use them twice a week. Students frequently utilize e-library resources, according to a study done by Oni et al (2016) on 'Awareness and utilization of electronic resources by students of Benson Idahosa University Benin City, Edo State Nigeria.' Thus, respondents' opinions on the most commonly accessed e-resources include e-books, which received 96 per cent support, e-journals, which received 88 per cent support, e-newspapers/magazines, which received 79 per cent support, and Wikipedia, which received 68 per cent of the support (57 per cent). Students commonly reference e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers/magazines, and Wikipedia, among other e-resources. The average percentage of respondents who agreed to all of the mentioned things (458, or 65 per cent) is, however, high. In contrast, Khan and Waheed (2015), surveyed students' utilization of e-resources, services, and facilities of the Central Library of the University of Peshawar in Pakistan, established that students' use of electronic resources was very low, with the usage of online databases and internet electronic resources being ranked 5th and 6th among the most popular used library services, while borrowing of books was ranked third.

In universities, researchers have been undertaking research skills and on the accessibility, awareness, and usability of Digital Libraries in and out of Nigerian Universities (Obande, et al., 2020; Moyo, 2017; Sejane, 2017 & Sushma, 2015). However, little is known about the awareness, and use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students in Nigerian Universities. Across Universities in Nigeria, specifically, universities in Southeastern Nigeria reports on the escapades of undergraduates regarding term paper writing and research abound. Supporting this, Odu (2018) revealed that preliminary observations of undergraduate research projects and their approach towards writing the project reveal that undergraduates find it difficult in completing their projects in record time. The author buttressed further that projects submitted show discrepancies in the organization, poor presentation, and substandard projects. It invariably means that

undergraduates in the Universities appear to have challenges in writing their research projects. This state of affairs is very much true for religious education students. Against this background, the researchers seek to investigate religious education students' awareness and use of theological commons for term paper writing and research in federal universities in Southeastern Nigeria and highlight its implications for improving students' research skills.

Statement of problem

Term paper writing and research are activities that require the acquisition of necessary intellectual skills and assistance to facilitate. The indispensable position of these activities in higher institutions has led to the provision of intellectual assistance and the advancement of information resource centres into digital centres. Specifically, in religious education studies, there exist advanced resource collections known as Theological Commons. This type of library aids the easy access to information relating to religious studies without inconveniences. This also enables students to acquire and improve on necessary skills for their term paper writing and research.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that many students in religious education struggle with this important activity. This is evidence of the quality of the term paper and research works submitted. In most cases, many ends up not being able to complete given research work. This has however reduced the credibility of most Nigerian institutions against their foreign counterparts. Researchers have undertaken studies on research skills and the accessibility, awareness, and usability of Digital Libraries in and out of Nigerian Universities. These studies reported in general the state of affairs with regards to the availability, awareness, and use of theological commons and students' research issues. However, little is known about the awareness, and use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students in Nigerian Universities. Against this background, the researchers seek to investigate religious education Student's awareness and

use of theological commons for term paper writing and research in the Federal Universities in Southeastern Nigeria.

Research Method

The descriptive survey design was used in conducting the study. Ezeh (2015) stated that descriptive survey research design is the most dominant procedure for collecting data and methodically describing facts and features of a specific population. The design was considered appropriate since it enables the researchers to comprehend the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective.

The study was carried out among religious education students in selected federal universities in Southeastern Nigeria. The choice of the area was informed by the researchers' observed plight of religious education students in term paper writing and research. A sample of 96 male students and 86 female students offering religious education as a course of study was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 25-item questionnaire designed by the researchers on a four-point rating scale tagged Theological Commons Awareness and Use Questionnaire (TCAUQ) created based on a review of the literature. The questionnaire items were validated by three experts, from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the trial-tested instrument responses were subjected to the Cronbach's alpha test of reliability. The instrument was administered to thirty (20) students outside the study area. This gave the reliability co-efficient value of 0.81 and 0.80 for clusters 1 (10 items on awareness) and 2 (15 items on use) respectively. The researchers administered the questionnaire to students with the help of three research assistants. The statistical analysis was done using an independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis one: there is no significant difference in the students' mean rating on awareness of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on gender.

Table 1: t-test analysis of the mean ratings on the awareness of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Dec
Male students	96	3.00	.20	180	-.428	.669	Accepted
Female students	86	3.01	.20				

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 shows the t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean ratings on the awareness of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on gender. Results show that a t-value of -.428 with a degree of freedom of 180 and a probability value of 0.669 was obtained. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings on the awareness of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on gender is therefore not rejected. The inference drawn is that the awareness of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on students' gender did not differ significantly (see also, Figure 1).

Hypothesis two: there is no significant difference in the students' mean rating on the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research based on gender.

Table 2: t-test analysis of students' awareness of theological commons on the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Dec
Male students	96	3.08	.20	180	2.441	.016	Rejected
Female students	86	3.00	.21				

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 shows the t-test examining whether religious education students use theological commons significantly for term paper writing and research by gender. Results show that a t- value of 2.441 with a degree of freedom of 180 and a probability value of .016 was obtained. The null hypothesis which stated that religious education students use theological commons significantly for term paper writing and research by gender is therefore not accepted. The inference drawn is that there is a gender difference in the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students (see also, Figure 1).

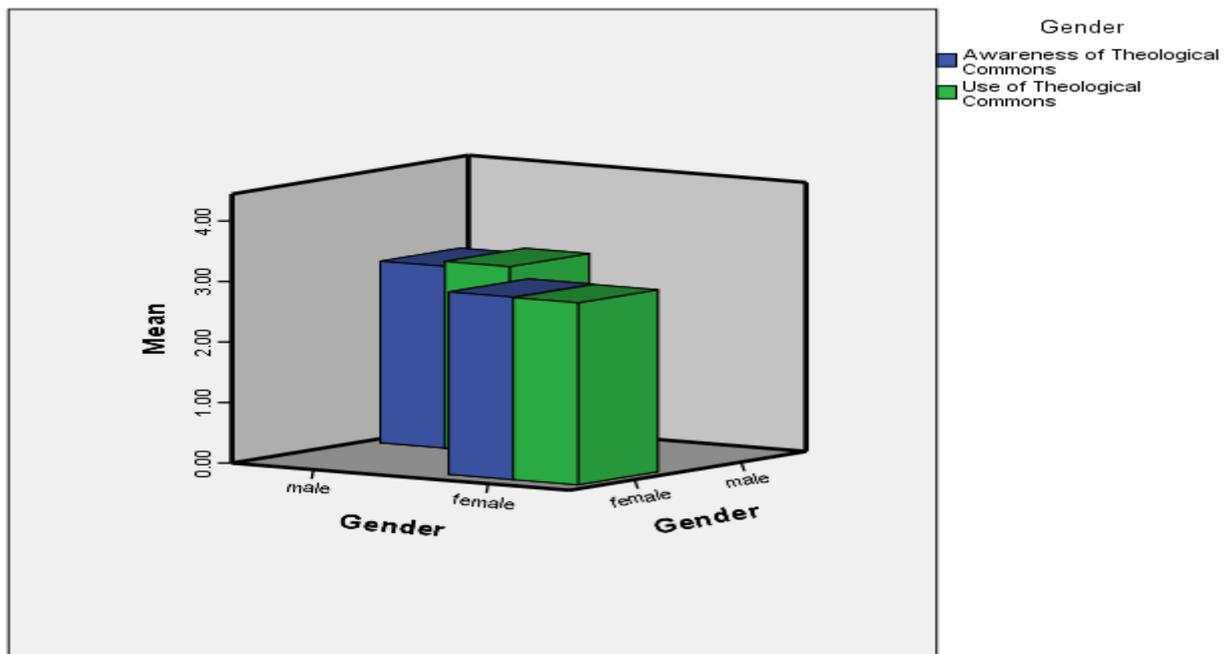


Figure 1: Students' ratings on awareness and use of theological commons for term paper writing and research by gender

The findings of this study show that there is no significant difference in the awareness of theological commons among religious education students for term paper writing and research by gender. Obande, et al. (2020) reported that digital library resources are available for students but are however confronted by some challenges. Srinivasulu and Balu (2019) opined that electronic information resources such as e-books, e-journals, e-databases, e-videos, e-images, and other multimedia formats are on the increase across various institutions.

The findings of this study show that there is a gender difference in the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students. Khan and Waheed (2015) revealed that students' use of electronic resources was very low. The researchers noted that these findings have implications for improved research skills among Religious Education students and it was recommended that there should be seminars and workshops to intensify the awareness and use of theological commons among religious education students and resolve hindrances to effective use of theological commons. It was recommended that there should be seminars and workshops to intensify the use of theological commons among religious education students for term paper writing and improved research skills.

Conclusion

The finding of this study showed that there is no significant difference in the awareness of theological commons among religious education students for term paper writing and research by gender. The finding of this study also showed that there is a gender difference in the use of theological commons for term paper writing and research among religious education students. For more awareness and use of theological commons among religious education students, there is a need to furnish them with an enabling environment for research and study.

References

- Adams, J., King, C., & Hook, D. (2011). *Global research reports: Africa*. Leeds: Evidence
- Akpojotor, O.J. (2016). Awareness and usage of electronic information resources among postgraduate students of library and information science in Southern Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1408. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1408/>
- Amjad, A., Ahmed, S., & Naeem, S. Bin. (2013). Use of electronic information resources among research scholars in the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 19(3), 316–328. Retrieved from <http://www.scopus.com/inward/record.url?eid=2s2.084885100519&partnerID=tZOtx3y1>.
- Ani, O. E., & Ahiauzu, B. (2008). Towards effective development of electronic information resources in Nigerian University Libraries. *Library Management*, 29(6/7), 504 – 514.
- Bhukuvhani, C., Chiparausha, B., & Zuvalinyenga, D. (2012). Effects of electronic information resources skills training for lecturers on pedagogical practices and research productivity. *International, Journal of Education and Development Using Information and Communication Technology*, 8 (1), 16-28.
- Brewer, L., Rick, H. & Grondin, K. A. (2017). Improving digital library experiences and support with online research guides. *Online Learning*, 21(3), 135-150. doi:10.24059/olj.v21i3.123710.
- Calland, R., & Diallo, F. (2013). *Access to information in Africa: Law, culture and practice*. (eds.) Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill.
- College Cliff (2021). Top 20 Accredited Colleges Of Religion. Retrieved from <https://collegecliffs.com/top-20-accredited-colleges-of-religion/>

- Cothran, T. (2011). Google scholar acceptance and use among graduate students: A quantitative study. *Library & Information Science Research*, 33(4), 283-301. DOI: 1016/j.lisr.2011.02.001
- Dien, S. I., & Bassey, B. A. (2019). Assessment of research skills acquisition among undergraduates in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 5(1). ISSN 2489-0073
- Ezeh, D. N. (2015). *Writing research proposal and report without tears*. Enugu, Timex Enterprises
- Gilbert, J. K., Knutson, K., & Gilbert, C. P. (2012). Adding an integrated library component to an undergraduate research methods course. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 45(1), 112-118. doi:10.1017/S1049096511001788
- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2021). Library Tutorial For Digital Resources. Retrieved from <https://library.gordonconwell.edu/Digital/Library/Tutorial>
- Hornby, A. S. (2015). Research. In *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, (9th edition, p.1255).
- Ishiaku, J. (2019). Global challenges and implementation of sustainable Christian Religious Education in Africa: Nigeria as a focal point. *World Educators Forum: An International Journal*, 11(1). ISSN: 2350-2401
- Khan, S. A. & Waheed, A.(2015). Digital Literacy Practices for Library Users at Government College University Libraries, Lahore. *Pakistan Library & Information Science Journal*, 46(4), 50–54.
- Kumar, G. R. (2016). Awareness and use of digital library resources by faculty members of Engineering College Libraries in Warangal District, Telangana: a study. *International Journal of Research in Library Science*, 2(2), 188-200.

- Liu, Z., & Luo, L. (2011). A comparative study of digital library use: Factors, perceived influences, and satisfaction. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 37(3), 230-236. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2011.02.015
- Moyo, M. (2017). Awareness and usage of electronic library resources in open distance learning by third-year students in the school of arts at the University of South Africa.
- NSBT Library Resource: Digital Theological Library. <https://www.nsbt.org/digital-theological-library>
- Nwakpa, P. (2015). Research in tertiary institutions in Nigeria: challenges and prospects: Implication for educational managers. *IORS Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20(6), 45-49.
- Obande, B. O., Osakwe, J., Ujakpa, M. M., Iyawa, G., Ikechukwu, A. O., & Amunkete, K. (2020). Awareness, accessibility, and usability of e-resources: university students' perspective. *IST-Africa 2020 Conference Proceedings Miriam Cunningham and Paul Cunningham (Eds) IST-Africa Institute and IIMC*, 2020 ISBN: 978-1-905824-64-9
- Obot, I. F. (2014). *Environmental factors and research skills acquisition among graduate students in federal universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, Nigeria*. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, University of Calabar.
- Odu, J. O. (2018). Assessment of research skills among undergraduates in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. *Sumerianz Journal of Education, Linguistics and Literature*, 1(3), 79-84.
- Oni, O., Oshiotse, O. J., & Momoh, U.A. (2016). Awareness and utilization of electronic resources by students of Benson Idahosa University Benin City, Edo State Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Library and Information Science*, 4(9), 242-248.

- Oullette, D. (2001). Subject guides in academic libraries: A user-centered study of uses and perceptions. *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Sciences*, 36(4), 436-451. doi:10.1353/ils.2011.0024
- Patra, C. (2010). *Digital repository in ceramics: A metadata study*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/212642>
- Sejane, L. (2017). *Access to and use of electronic information resources in the academic libraries of the Lesotho Library Consortium*.
- Srinivasulu, P., & Balu, C. C. (2019). *Awareness and Usage of E-Resources by Faculty Members at Vardhaman College of Engineering (Autonomous), Hyderabad: A Study Library Philosophy and Practice*.
- Sushma, N. J. (2015) Access, awareness and use of electronic resources by postgraduate students in Gulbarga University. *International Journal of Informative & Futuristic Research*, 2(6).
- Ukachi, N. B. (2015). Information literacy of students as a correlate of their use of electronic resources in university libraries in Nigeria. *The Electronic Library*, 33(3), 486–501.
- The University of Central Florida (n.d.). Religion and Cultural Studies - B.A. Retrieved from <https://philosophy.cah.ucf.edu/program/religion-and-cultural-studies/>
- Yebowaah, A.F., & Plockey, D.D.F. (2017). Awareness and use of electronic resources in University Libraries: A Case Study of University for Development Studies Library. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1562. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1562/>