ACTIVITY TWO

Browsing the Database of Religious History

SUMMARY
The “Browse” feature on the Database of Religious History (DRH) allows users to search for completed entries related to a religious group, place, or expert source. During this activity, students will follow a series of detailed instructions that will introduce them to this feature. They will be asked to search for various elements, and this process will help them explore the entries. Students will then be asked to answer a series of questions to reflect on the experience.

PURPOSE
The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the “Browse” feature on the DRH. After following these instructions, the students should be prepared to use the database to answer additional research questions. They will also gain experience working with databases in general and develop their data literacy. Data literacy is an important skill that is required for many professional career paths.

INSTRUCTIONS
The following steps should be completed individually online:

1. Go to the Database of Religious History: https://religiondatabase.org/

2. Navigate to “Browse” (located at the top of the screen).

3. A search bar will appear. Type in the name of the religious group or place that you are studying. For example, “Ancient Egyptian” or “Egypt”.

4. You will then be provided with a selection of entries related to your query. Select the topic that best fits your research interest. For example, “Ancient Egypt – Old Kingdom”.

5. You will then be taken to the selected entry. These entries consist of expert answers to a series of questions. Use the information provided to complete the following. In some cases, the required information may not be available – the expert chose to leave a field blank, perhaps due to a lack of data. In this case, note “not available” and move to the next question.

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a. Citing the source: at the top of the entry, click the “Cite Entry” button. Copy out the citation you are given.

b. Additional research: Scroll down and click on the “Sources” heading. Write down the source information for two additional sources that you can use to complete further research on the topic.

c. Browsing the Data: Search for the answers to the following questions. Select the “General Variables” heading to see the related questions. Under the “Membership Group Interactions” subheading, find the answer to, “Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion”. Summarize the given answer.

d. Browsing the Data: Scroll down and select the “Beliefs” heading. Under the “Burial and the Afterlife” subheading, look for the answer to, “Belief in the Afterlife”. Summarize the given answer.

e. Browsing the Data: Still under the “Beliefs” heading, go to the “Supernatural Beings” subheading. Find the answer to, “Are supernatural beings present”. Summarize the given answer.

f. Browsing the Data: Take some time to explore the data, reading through the types of questions that have been asked, in addition to the answers provided. Select three questions that you find interesting, and note them down. Be sure to include the heading and subheading under which they are located, and then note the question

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**Questions for Reflection**

Read through the following questions and reflect on your answers independently. Then join a partner or a small group, and discuss.

1. Did you find any of the entry answers surprising?
2. Did you disagree with any of the answers?
3. Which questions do you want to learn more about?
4. With your partner or group, discuss the extra three answers you selected. Why did you make this selection? What did you find particularly interesting?
5. With your partners, browse for a different religious group, and see whether the answers are similar or different.
6. Consider the structure of the database as sets of expert answers to guided questions. How does this impact what you were able to learn about your religious group? What does this suggest about the construction of history?