The first person I interviewed is my sister-in-law, Sheila. Sheila graduated from Arizona State University and has both a Bachelors and Masters Degree in Finance, now working as a Senior Business Financial Analyst for Nationwide Insurance. She was previously living in Arizona with my older brother, but about a year ago they decided to move to Michigan where they are currently living, closer to family. A fun fact; when Sheila initially told her boss that she had to quit in order to move, her boss offered her the opportunity to work from home if she agreed to continue working for Nationwide. Sheila is the perfect interviewee for my research, since she has done and is doing nearly the exact same thing I would like to do, and although I state that I’m interested in becoming a CFA (Certified Financial Analyst), these job titles are very similar. It was at my brothers house where I conducted my interview with Sheila. She was able to show me her at-home workstation and provided me with some documentation and answers to my research questions. The genres I analyzed with Sheila was financial models used to present analytics and balance sheets. Most of her work is done on Microsoft Excel and Powerpoint, and because of confidentiality purposes, I’m unable to use filled out spreadsheets or powerpoints, but I will use examples.

The second person I interviewed is my grandfather. He graduated from Oakland University with a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and he minored in Finance. In 1976, he created his own insurance company called Action Group Insurance, Inc. Although what I’m pursuing is different from what he pursued, he has a lot of experience in the field I’m going to be entering, which makes him another great candidate. I conducted my interview with my grandfather at his office in Mt. Clemens and again at his house, as a continuation of the initial interview. The genre we primarily discussed was the presentations of the information to clients.

The first genre I will cover is the financial models. Financial models can be understood as the final product of putting together financial and income statements, balance sheets, future forecasts, and some more information required to make correct assumptions about a company. There are many types of financial models, but the example I am using for this project is the merger model. I asked Sheila, what are financial models and how are they used? She responded with an example of one of the many models used and stated “the merger model is used to analyze the combination of two companies coming together, hence the word merger.” I’d like to note that all analysis in the Finance field is done on Microsoft Excel and the documents get pretty lengthy, so the description of the merger model will remain brief. Continuing, Sheila says “the financial model is simply a calculated representation of a company’s worth, and the merger represents two of those companies, whatever they may be, joining as one.” These models are very important to a company because the analyst that calculates the math will be the one responsible for whatever decision is made. If false information is calculated into the models, and if those errors go undetected, there is a great possibility that those errors will be catastrophic to the investors. This is, what I believe to be, the number one reason why having, not only an accurate model, but also a very smart analysts behind the wheel of finances is important. As I described before, financial models are quite simple, but they have a lot of power within them as they can make or break a company when the documentation is neglected.

The next genre I will cover is the balance sheet. Balance sheets are another document used in Microsoft Excel and the purpose of this document is to provide a complete list of a company’s liabilities. Everything the company owns, including assets and debts and future forecasts, are stated in the balance sheet. These documents are important to a financial analyst because their job is to recommend decisions, and when one company wants to make a potential investment into another company, they read that company’s balance sheet to see if investing would be a good or bad decision. The only language you will see on balance sheets are categories and numbers, a very common language base seen in all financial analyst documentation, but these categories and numbers represent an entire company’s life and all it’s worth. At this point, you should be able to easily understand why an analyst plays a very important role in a company, since they have the power to, like stated previously, make or break a company. Just like the analyst reading a company’s balance sheet, the analyst creating one for their own company plays the same role, with the same amount of responsibility. Numbers do not lie, so the analyst with the job must input correct formulas to create the correct information to represent their company. Balance sheets are “simple but very complex” Sheila stated after I asked her, what makes up a balance sheet? She dove into my question by stating “when you first look at the Excel spreadsheet, it’s all numbers and titles, but when you highlight each of those cells, you see an inputted formula.” Further, “it’s just like a watch” she explains. “The face of the balance sheet is just a jumble of numbers with dollar signs, but under the skin is where all the mechanics and moving parts take place.” Those mechanics and moving parts being the formulas used. She then states “This is why it is very important for companies to pick a smart analyst; they need to understand proper use of Excel functions and all the rules for being a financial analyst.”

The final genre I discussed, with my grandfather, which I will refer to as John, was the presentations of the information that gets analyzed. Typically, presentations will be created in Microsoft Powerpoint to provide superior management with the information needed to make investment decisions. I asked John, how important is creating the presentation of the information for the analysts bosses? His response was “although the financial analyst will make the predictions on the investment, their job is not making the decision, but providing the necessary information for superiors to make one.” The role you have, in creating these representations in Powerpoint, is extremely vital, because although you might seem to be just another worker reporting to your boss, your identity and authority is higher up on the pay scale than you might think. John continued by saying:

“your boss isn’t going to pull out a calculator or monitor whether or not you put in the correct information, you get hired for a reason; to do that job. You get hired to take on this task and your boss trusts you to make the right decisions. So, if you mess up, you could get kicked to the curb because they don’t care, there’s many finance students looking to replace your job, and that’s why you need to pay attention in school, to learn this stuff”.

My grandfather, John, is a frightening businessman, and he made it clear the importance of learning how to properly be a financial analyst. He owns an insurance company, but he’s worked in finances and knows what it takes.

 What you will see in these presentations are performance reviews in the form of graphs, future forecasts, charts showing debts, projected growth, sales information, trends, recommendations, and any limitations. Basically, all the documents used in Excel to represent a company, such as the balance sheet, is shown in the presentations. These are very critical in business and without a dedicated financial analyst on your team, you could make bad decisions that jeopardize your institution financially.

Through interviews with people that work in the world of Finance, I was able to see exactly what I too will be doing and distinguish the different types of genres used in the field, giving me a very solid outlook on what to expect. The interviews I conducted consisted of questions that focused on genre and how to distinguish between them, though many of the answers I received might seem less informative than I anticipated. Most of the documents that I’ll be using as a financial analyst are on Microsoft Excel, which I knew already, but these documents consist of the same formulas in calculating the information for analysis. What I’m trying to get at is that, even though I reviewed different documents, they all relate to each other very closely. For example, the merger financial model I described consists of portions of the balance sheet, which is a different document, but they are used together. I learned that this observation is really common among the duties of a financial analyst and the genres overlap because they’re used together to make one final product, that being the investment recommendation presentation. Overall,  I’m satisfied with this project and I most definitely benefited because I learned information I would not have known if I didn’t research it and conduct those interviews. The genres in the finance field may seem really simple, but if you look at fine print of the documents used, you see much more than what first meets the eye.