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Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research
Award

2022

Winning Reflective Essay: 2022 LHULRA Winner Shelby Oshel

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When I began this project, I found myself in a situation that is all but universal amongst many undergraduates. When the class began, I had a surface-level knowledge of many topics that interested me, but I lacked a deep understanding of how to formulate and conduct research on such topics on my own. The task seemed daunting and unmanageable, and yet through the calm, organized guidance provided to me through both the Forsyth library site and staff, I was able to create an original piece of research.

My instructor, Ms. Hollie Marquess, initially tasked the class with identifying three manageable topics that could be researched and reported within the scope of a semester. After choosing three topics, the assignment required adequate support for the topics through secondary scholarship available through Forsyth Library. Through the databases on the Forsyth Library website, I quickly identified secondary scholarship that was pertinent to my topic with a few rudimentary searches. The databases were straightforward to navigate before I knew how to use Boolean operators and quotation marks to refine search results.

Ms. Marquess invited Mr. Brian Gribben to speak to our class about the many databases and resources available to students through the Forsyth Library. He explained how to conduct concise searches to find meaningful results through this talk. Mr. Gribben's knowledge and willingness to help create an environment that encouraged students to ask questions about library resources and significantly understand how to conduct fruitful searches. Mr. Gribben asked each student for their topic and gave an example of a possible search that they could use. He carefully explained using quotation marks and Boolean operators to target results that may have gone overlooked without such phrasing. After sharing both the example search and the importance of Boolean operators, Mr. Gribben gave an in-depth report on the functionality of the advanced

search function on the library's website. Then, he explained the process of taking out an interlibrary loan.

The interlibrary loan services provided by Forsyth opened doors to source material that I would not have had access to without the service. The entire process of taking out a loan was incredibly straightforward and stress-free. I accessed vital primary documents that profoundly shaped my research by requiring only basic information, sometimes only a title and author. An almost indescribable feeling of euphoria comes with the ability to hold and read primary documents from far-away places.

Many of the sources included in my research were somewhat challenging to find. After considering Mr. Gribben's advice, I began to formulate a system for my searches. If my initial investigations did not provide the results I was looking for, I would alter the Boolean operators, provide quotation marks, and switch between databases. This proved to be very successful. After spending a class period in the library, I began to feel much more confident in my ability to gather information from scholarly sources.

Throughout this process, I learned how to source mine, utilize Boolean operators and quotation marks within searches, place an interlibrary loan, and gain a deeper understanding of the databases used by the university. Above all else, I learned to appreciate the amount of time and effort to organizing research. From choosing a title to properly formatting citations, research requires the best work out of individuals. The library plays an immense role in ensuring the ease of use and availability of resources for students.