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2019

Winning Reflective Essay: 2019 LHULRA Winner Avary Huff

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Recommended Citation

Huff, Avary, "Winning Reflective Essay: 2019 LHULRA Winner Avary Huff" (2019). *2019 Lynn Haggard Undergraduate Library Research Award*. 5.

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At the beginning of the spring semester, I was assigned a midterm paper in Management Principles and about three weeks out I began working on the large assignment. As a freshman in college, I have not been assigned many projects that require scholarly articles and was anxious about my ability to locate them. The only time I had used online databases to research was my junior year of high school for National History Day. However, in order to refresh our memory on researching, my professor, Thomas Lippert, brought one of the librarians into our Management class as a guest speaker for this assignment.

Upon visiting our class, Nathan Elwood first reviewed the requirements for our paper with us and explained which research resources would be most beneficial to us, where to access them, and how to use them appropriately. By taking us to the FHSU Library homepage, he showed us how to access the databases that Forsyth Library subscribes to and walked us through using them to their full advantage. First and foremost, you must select a database that pertains to your topic. For my paper, I narrowed the results down to solely “Business & Economics” and used ABI/INFORM as well as Business Source Premier. I had been on the databases before Nathan spoke to our class and was overwhelmed by all of the information and was searching incorrectly. Nathan explained to our class that we must ask a question in the search bar by using key words. Additionally, to broaden the search results, we could add synonyms through the use of “Boolean Operators”. I had heard this word when I did research in high school but had forgotten its meaning. Boolean Operators are essentially conjunctions that allow you to combine synonyms when researching by using the word “OR”, or to eliminate topics by using the word “NOT”. The focus on my paper was sustainability in the hotel industry, so I typed in *“sustainability OR eco-friendly” AND “hotels OR ‘hotel industry’”*. Nathan also reminded us to put multi-word phrases in quotation marks so that these words are searched for side by side. If

not, the database would search for either word anywhere in the article. Because our midterm paper required scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, I limited the search results on the sidebar by selecting “full-text”, “scholarly journals”, and even changed the date range to only about 15 years out so that I could find the most recent and relevant information.

When I found an article title that intrigued me from the list, I opened it and read the abstract to decide if I would read continue reading the full article. Reading the abstracts helped me tremendously by saving me a large chunk of time and allowed me to evaluate the potential sources further than making sure that they were peer-reviewed and recent. However; even after all of the techniques Nathan explained to us and narrowing my search results, I still could not find articles that contained information that I wanted to focus on. I felt overwhelmed, even discouraged and, in that moment, I decided to schedule a one-on-one appointment with a librarian through the Research Help Desk in Forsyth Library. Nathan sat down with me personally in his office and assisted me in the research process. Together, we acquired about eight potential sources in 45 minutes which sped my research along exponentially. He told me that I was searching correctly in the databases using the methods he had taught me, but that I needed to broaden my search and helped me do so.

By working with Nathan, not only in my Management class, but also one-on-one, I was able to accurately and efficiently locate sources for my paper that once felt impossible. Nathan reminded me to be persistent and patient because researching can be quite repetitive. When it came time to cite the sources I had used in my paper, even though citations were available on the databases that I could copy and paste, I created them by hand. This not only ensured that they were accurate but strengthened my APA citation skills: both in-text and parenthetical. In addition to the citation skills, my researching skills were strengthened from this monotonous process. As

a result of researching for this term paper, I feel information literate: confident using the Forsyth Library databases, Boolean Operators, and creating citations. Also, I know that if my confidence in these skills is ever lacking, the librarians and their insight are only one appointment away. ☺