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I chose to do my honors government and politics thesis on the United Nations and its decision-making process in the Great Lakes region of Africa because it allowed me to continue field research I conducted in Uganda in a more theoretical and academic setting. While studying abroad in Uganda, we were required to complete a six-week field research practicum. I chose to do mine on Rwandan refugees in Uganda because I have always been interested in forced migration. I had a number of resources available to me through SIT, my study abroad program, both online and in print. However, I found myself downloading most of my articles from the University of Maryland's online resources because they were much more extensive. As I prepared to head up to a refugee settlement, I filled my laptop with journal articles I was able to download. I loved the research I had the opportunity to carry out in Uganda, so when I returned to the University of Maryland it felt natural to do my thesis on a related topic. Having studied at the University of Maryland, I have been fortunate enough to receive the assistance of staff members and librarians throughout my college career and so, by the time I started my thesis, I found the process of finding and using library books and journal articles natural.

During the preliminary stages of my research, I wanted to read a lot of different articles and books to get an overall idea of what had already been written and what would be key to draw upon. While I love being able to download articles, I also really like having the ability to read books on paper. I soon checked out nearly the entirety of the library's sections on refugees, the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and the United Nations. At one point, I found there was a video in Hornbake library that suited my research needs – I was amazed at the ease with which I could rent a movie and watch it right there at the computers.

Later in the research process, I needed more specific articles as well as primary documents. As I went through the research process, I sometimes would get stuck struggling while trying to find relevant articles and books. Because my topic was very specific and not directly written about, I found that being too specific often led to no results. I often would then use different words that had the same meaning to see if there were buzz words I was not aware of. When this still didn't work, I often used Google Scholar through University of Maryland. I really like this feature because it allows me to use Google, which I am very comfortable with, and simultaneously search the UMD database for articles.

I asked a librarian about how to find sources from the United Nations and was directed towards the National Archives and the Library of Congress. Fortunately, I visited both locations and enjoyed being able to directly handle primary documents. I remember looking through different documents on refugees in the Congo in the 1960s and finding a letter regarding the transportation of an elephant from Congo to the Woodley-Park Zoo. This gave me background information on important names and dates to look up in University of Maryland's library catalogue – it was the combination of primary documents and background

information found in UMD's books and articles that allowed me to find what I needed to complete my research.

I found that there were a few main authors that wrote about refugees and the UNHCR and a few key authors that wrote about the Rwandan Genocide and aftermath. While the journals articles were published in often led them credibility, I always looked up any author in Google so that I knew their background, current position, and any strong criticisms of them and their work. As I read more extensively and had some field experience, I could also identify some information that was clearly false or slanted. When this occurred, I would often look up the source and any reviews it had. I would continue to read the article or book so I could see if anything else was similarly slanted and biased and look for similar reactions elsewhere.

My thesis advisor helped me with much of the research and planning for my thesis. During my first semester of thesis-writing, he advised that I should write article summaries of any articles or books I read that seemed useful. I would take notes and then write up page long summaries. However, I felt that a number of articles and books I read ultimately seemed to have no relevance to what I was planning to write. This was a mistake. Professor McCauley also worked with me to create a timeline for my thesis completion and we decided I should finish a chapter every other week throughout the fall semester. Every time I started a chapter, I found that I had some background knowledge from reading widely but I would struggle to find the article or book where I had read the concept or fact, as they were often the articles and books I had dismissed as irrelevant. Next time I conduct research, I will take much better notes just as I was advised to do.

I had to defend my thesis in front of three readers. During the discussion of my paper, a number of points were raised that were expansions of ideas I explored in my paper or questions about background. Finally, the many articles I had read that I failed to tie in to my paper became well worth the time spent. After some deliberation, my panel gave my thesis a rating of high honors, the highest rating a government honors thesis could receive. They told me I had received this marking for two reasons. First, I had incorporated field research from Uganda into my thesis. Second, I seemed to have extensive knowledge on the subject and was able to answer questions and contribute to discussion about the themes brought up that extended past the paper.

I realized during my thesis research that I would like to go into research as my next career. I have applied to several jobs and internships as a research assistant in the social sciences. I intend to pursue a graduate level of education and hope to work at a think tank some day.