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### Library Award Reflection Essay

During the Fall semester of 2019, I took HIST 208Y, a research seminar course that focused on the process of research and professional writing, with the theme of revolution. The culmination of our time and experience in this course was to be a twelve to fifteen page long research paper, using primary and secondary sources to argue a thesis. At the beginning of the semester, this seemed to be a daunting task, as I had never written a paper of such length before. Though I knew I wanted to focus on the Greek Revolution, as I am half-Greek and had visited my family's home island of Chios that summer, I did not have an inkling as to how I should begin a project of this magnitude, never mind the fact that I had to do another paper of a similar scope for another class!

One day, we had our weekly class discussion at McKeldin Library instead of our usual classroom. History librarian Dr. Eric Lindquist demonstrated the library's databases and search tools, showing us how to find sources for our research, he also gave us an overview of how to locate books in the library. We then got a few minutes to play around with these databases and search tools in one of the computer labs, and during this time, I stumbled across a book that I would become very familiar with over the next few months: *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry 1821-1828*. I decided to check it out, as it seemed like it would be an interesting read. That chance find ended up shaping my project, as I found the poems to be fascinating in their depictions of the Ottomans as murderous brutes while praising the pious Christian Greeks. I knew that although the Greeks had ample cause for rebellion, they unnecessarily committed as many atrocities *during* this war as the Turks had, and that the

Protestants of the West typically looked down on the Orthodox Christianity of the Greeks at the time. I decided to research why the West would overlook these and decide to support the Greek Revolution, whether through economic aid as private entities did all over Europe and in America, or militarily as Great Britain, France, and Russia did.

To find sources, I made heavy use of the library's online search tools. When I found a source that seemed pertinent to my research, I read brief portions of it if it was available as an e-book or an article. If it seemed it would be usable, I scoured it for any and all relevant information. Having access to JSTOR and similar databases through the library proved to be invaluable. Often though, these sources tended to be printed books, which I would immediately reserve for pick up (I do not live on campus and thus could not go to the library to find the books myself whenever convenient, though I would have liked to). I would scour these books too, as soon as I had them in hand, using the table of contents and the index to find the exact sections I would find what I needed in. I then had to differentiate the sources further into primary and secondary sources. I tried to put more of an emphasis on primary sources, as the voices of those actually recording their thoughts and motivations during the war itself spoke the loudest to me. When I did not find the specific information I needed, the annotations often pointed me to other possible sources. This is how I found most of the primary source material I used. Again, the library had most of these sources either in print or access through an online database such as HathiTrust or JSTOR, and I am incredibly fortunate for this.

The online tools were essential, but just as important to my project was the interlibrary loan system. As vast as McKeldin's collection proved to be, it is simply impossible to carry everything, but I was very lucky that there are a number of nearby libraries our campus has partnered with that not only had the source I needed, but were more than happy to send it directly

to McKeldin for my eager dissection. I cannot stress enough how thankful I am for this, and I shiver at the thought of having to undertake this task without such a system in place for UMD students.

Besides Dr. Lindquist, whose demonstration was a boon to my research, the front desk staff of the library very helpful. They answered questions I had about books, return policies, dates, and interlibrary loans to the best of their ability; when they did not know the answers themselves, they happily gave me the contact information of someone who could help. I also found them to be extremely efficient in fulfilling my reserve orders in a timely manner, which, I am once again very grateful for. I often was able to pick up a book I reserved a mere few hours after placing the reservation! Perhaps this is the standard for the library here, but I have experience at other Maryland institutions, and they were not this efficient in checking books out. My instructor, Lauren Michalak, was very helpful as well. Her suggestions throughout the writing and editing process were invaluable.

This experience is one that I am glad to have had. I learned how to take what I need from a source without spending a week reading it from cover to cover. It also taught me the value of footnotes and the author's citations, as many of the sources I ended up using were ones that I saw the author of a secondary or tertiary source make reference to. I learned the value of the library's resources. The search tool, databases, interlibrary loans, and online reservations made life much easier. I enjoyed this project, and learned a great deal from it. Most importantly though, I learned that even the most daunting of tasks can be made simple, and can even be fun if you make it enjoyable. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about this fascinating moment in history and doing the research for this project. I also ended up buying a copy of *Greek Revolution and the American Muse* for my mother for Christmas, she was ecstatic!

If I could change any of it, I would have gotten started sooner. Had I known how much easier the library would have made this, I would not have let my nervousness impede me so much. I began this project worried that I had bitten off more than I could chew. I had several large assignments and minor work to do for other courses in addition to this work, and I let that intimidate me initially, and I stalled for a little bit before I put myself in gear and got to work. By the end of the project, I was well over the fifteen page maximum, and I would have kept going if I could. Perhaps I could turn this into a full book someday. I can only hope that I still have access to the emporium of information that is USMAI and the Big Ten library alliance!