

## Reflective Essay

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The library is a definite perk of being a part of the University of Maryland, College Park. As a large public university, students here have more resources at their beck and call than they probably know what to do with. We have eight libraries, which is in itself remarkable. On top of this, we have scores of online resources. Although I rarely have time to read books during the school year anymore, I have gotten into the habit of checking out vast quantities of reading material to peruse during my free time during the breaks, reading about topics from the history of food as it relates to mankind to Japanese graffiti.

As a journalism student, research is paramount to my area of study. I write for the Diamondback, always doing copious amounts of research before each story I write. For purposes related to journalism, access to UMCP's seemingly boundless online resources has proven invaluable. I have used online databases and journals extensively during my time here at Maryland, for classes ranging from Oral Communication to Sexuality in Japanese Literature.

For the purpose of this essay, I will discuss the research I did for my Journalism History course last semester. I actually enjoyed doing research for this term paper. I wrote my paper about Wilfred Burchett, the somewhat unknown Australian journalist who was the first to cover Hiroshima, post-atomic bomb. He faced numerous obstacles from the American military and government, who did not want word of the horrific effects of the bomb to be known to the rest of the world. He also faced hostility from Japanese police and military forces after Japan's surrender. One of the things I remember most from my research is that Burchett sent out his story from Hiroshima to Tokyo (where it would then be sent out to London) by Morse code, because there were no telegraphs left in the city.

I decided to research Burchett for my final paper because I was intrigued by Hiroshima and its portrayal by the press. I met with my professor to discuss my paper proposal, which was originally something like "Compare coverage of Hiroshima from a Japanese newspaper's perspective and an American newspaper's perspective." My professor, John Kirch, told me that Japanese newspapers were controlled by the

Japanese government at this time, so they would be biased, and of course he was right. Professor Kirch guided me in the direction of Burchett, and I am grateful for his input, because the topic was worthwhile and fascinating.

For the research project I exclusively used books from our university's library system. I used four books, including biographies and autobiographies, to piece together a comprehensive story on Burchett's courageous contribution to journalism. I found them by using the online catalog and noting all the books in which Burchett was prominently featured. I do also remember going to the non-print section of Hornbake Library and watching a short video about Burchett that I didn't use in my research. Because I did all the research myself, I did not consult my professor or a librarian. I do regret not doing so, because perhaps they would have pointed me to sources that would have enhanced my research, but at the time I did not think it was necessary because I already had four large books from which to draw information from. However, I feel like I should have covered all sides of Burchett—his weaknesses as well as his strengths. Reading more than just biographies and autobiographies could have helped me develop an essay that was as nonbiased as it could be.

From my search process, I learned that it is quite satisfying to find sources that are useful to you. I find a secret thrill in looking up books at McKeldin, whether my purpose is for research or for fun. During my research project, I liked going through all the books I got and finding what added on to the story I already had. I think my experience will help me in the future. After all, it's a lot easier to do what you enjoy than to do what you dread.