My research is part of a course sequence for the English Honors Program. In my Spring 2013 Junior Honors Seminar, I discussed my interest in ghazal poetry of South Asia with Dr. Randy Ontiveros, the Program Director. Prof. Ontiveros introduced me to the name of a Kashmiri-American poet, Agha Shahid Ali, who was instrumental in bringing ghazal poetry into the English language poetry canon. I was very excited because this idea had the potential to be carved into a very interesting research topic.

I used the UMD Library WorldCat catalog to explore primary and secondary sources on "Agha Shahid Ali," "ghazals," "ghazals in English," "Kashmir," and "Kashmir conflict." I also used combination phrasing such as "Agha Shahid Ali ghazals" and "Kashmir ghazals" to elicit more specific results from library databases. WorldCat catalog offered an exhaustive listing of books that I could find at McKeldin library or, if they were unavailable on campus, request an Interlibrary Loan. The ILL was instrumental in helping me find international editions of anthologies such as V.J. Kiernan's *Poems by Faiz* and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets*. These books were unavailable as ebooks, but through the efficient ILL system I was able to receive them within a week. These anthologies confirmed the viability of my focus on Agha Shahid Ali as the poet for my research project.

My next step was to read Ali's poetry to chart a specific thesis for my project. I was able to obtain *The Veiled Suite* from McKeldin. This anthology was a comprehensive collection of all of Ali's poems. I found that Ali's poetry was heavily influenced by his thoughts on the fragile political situation in Kashmir (a land that has been fought over by Pakistan and India for decades), in addition to his own life experiences. Although Ali was an accomplished poet and wrote in free verse, the pantoum, sestinas, and many other forms, he was almost single-mindedly focused on ghazals towards the end of his life. I was intrigued by this change and decided to read about Ali's personal perspective on ghazals.

I discovered *The Rebel's Silhouette* and *Ravishing DisUnities* browsing the section on Ali at McKeldin. Both of them had sumptuous introductions by the poet penning down his thoughts on the importance of ghazal poetry and his personal efforts in ensuring that the form is preserved in its centuries old Perso-Arabic roots respectively. When I paired Ali's strong interest in bringing the "real" ghazal into English language with Ali's sadness for the situation in Kashmir and his tendency to unpack his complicated identity through poetry, I found my thesis: To show how the poetics of Ali's ghazal exemplify his hybrid identity (multiplicity in language as expression, religion as devotion, history as remembrance, and geographical location as reality) while still preserving his position as a poet of the English language.

My thesis statement was initially not as developed as shown above. I had meaningful conversations with my research adviser, Dr. Laura Rosenthal, who was encouraging of my beginning ideas in my prospectus. Prof. Rosenthal suggested that I should try searching for published articles on Ali through the MLA International Bibliography. My findings were eventful as I made connections with the scholarly conversation on English ghazal poetry and Agha Shahid Ali. Unfortunately I did not find many scholarly papers on Ali that could indicate to me a unified or divided scholarly direction. However, the MLA International Bibliography on UMD's website still proved to be useful because I connected with other humanities databases such as JSTOR for scholarly research papers.

I found Malcolm Woodland's article, "Memory's Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghazal," to be very useful in teaching me the importance and uniqueness of the concept of hybridity in a ghazal. Furthermore, Nishat Zaidi's "'Center/Margin Dialectics and the Poetic Form: The Ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali" highlighted the relation of Ali's poetry to his complicated identity. I combined the concept of hybridity with Ali's many hyphenated identities by tying language, faith, history, and location to the actual form of the ghazal. I unpacked ghazal's literal form to a metaphoric symbol for Ali's hybrid identity. This was the strength of my thesis: I combined disparate ideas in existing (limited) scholarly conversation on Ali by imparting them with a unique motivation in the form of my research project.

My research project was an year-long commitment, but one I was very happy with from the beginning to the end. It was definitely daunting to write a full-fledged humanities research paper for an Honors Program, but the skills I learned during my research process will benefit me in my professional career. I used to only prefer the "library building and shelves" approach for my research, but my interactions with ILL and online humanities databases showed me a complementary approach. While the actual library (McKeldin) was of great help in serendipitously finding useful resources, the electronic library systems (ILL, databases) truly sped up my research process by the sheer convenience and efficiency. I have come to a newfound appreciation for both in furthering scholarly activities on- and off-campus

I spent quite a lot of time in the library (in-person and online) just trying to find how to perform a certain task, be it finding a certain subject section or searching through the most useful database. In my opinion, these tasks should be basic knowledge for all Maryland students. Personally, speaking with some of my friends, many of them were unaware of even the ILL system. And I can personally attest to its tremendous usefulness. I think that UMD libraries can accomplish better communication with students by forging relationships with introductory level professors. If awareness of these basic tasks is made early in the college career, it is possible that students will come to enjoy the research process and improve the quality of their scholarly output.