

Library Research Reflection Essay

My dream is to one day become a great pediatric doctor and so the subject of childhood obesity was not a novel one to me. In my four years of volunteering in the pediatric unit of the hospital, I have come across many kids who face the problems associated with this serious health condition. Not only have these kids had to deal with the physical health complications associated with childhood obesity, but also its impact on their social and psychological health. This was the driving force that led me to investigate this interesting and prevalent health topic. With this goal in mind I went to the best place I knew for more information, Mckeldin Library.

I discovered my sources by searching through numerous online databases that I learned about through a presentation offered in my sophomore chemistry class. This presentation, given by a very knowledgeable librarian, helped me learn about the databases offered through UMD libraries. This presentation was especially helpful, for me, because it was tailored for science majors who would need to search through multiple scientific databases. I learned not only how to access reliable sources, but also how to cite them. The electronic generation program, Endnote, was made organizing my various sources considerably easier to manage. Having a whole class period dedicated to learning how to make use of the resources UMD offers truly changed my time here at Maryland. It allowed me to gain confidence in my research abilities and opened the doors for me to expand my educational knowledge base.

In composing my paper, I felt the confidence to take my learning beyond the classroom and tackle many difficult areas of research and evaluate their connections to childhood obesity. Because I was able to utilize resources such as Web of Knowledge, Science Direct, and Endnote I was able to critically analyze the validated causes and effects of childhood obesity, while creating depth for the paper itself. I chose to keep to online resources because, in this day and

age of instantaneous information access, that is where one can find the most up-to-date published scientific studies.

There were many who I would like to thank for helping me and making the composition of this paper as rewarding as it was. First, I would like to thank the librarian who showed my chemistry class how to utilize the scientific databases provided by UMD libraries. It was an 8 am lab, yet she was so patient in explaining each and every program as clearly as she could. I was too shy at the time to raise my hand, so I never got her name but I will never forget the impact she had on me. Her presentation and patience allowed me to successfully understand what resources were here at Maryland and how to use them. Because of her, I was able to find reliable sources from many prestigious journals, such as *The International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *Nature*, *Pediatrics*...etc., and incorporate them flawlessly into my paper, allowing to raise the caliber of my research and composition skills. I would also like to thank my professor who helped me tremendously by allowing me to talk through my thought and research process, which aided me in organizing my ideas. My professor always listened intently to the ideas and messages that I wanted to get across through my paper. He would then help me stay true to my intended goal and offer valuable advice that would help get that message through to my intended audience.

When I started composing my paper, I knew that I wanted a comprehensive and new approach in tackling the problem of childhood obesity. I initially had way more sources than those that made it to my final bibliography, thanks to the power of UMD library resources. As I wanted my paper to be thorough, I researched across many different disciplines such as physiology, politics, biochemistry, economics, history, and psychology. When I had read through and gotten a grasp on what childhood obesity meant to each respective field of research, I began

to narrow my sources down by choosing those that were directly related to either a cause or effect of childhood obesity. As I went through my first evaluation round, I eliminated sources that were repetitive or inconsequential, I narrowed the studies to the ones that were specific yet inclusive. At the end of my second evaluation round, I was glad to be able to preserve a few sources from each discipline, while further narrowing down by keeping only those that were connected to the story I was telling.

This entire research process has allowed me to completely redefine my understanding of the scientific research process. Before, I viewed the scientific research method as a somewhat obscure topic covered in a few science classes, only now do I realize how vital and pertinent the scientific research method is to every one of our discoveries, past and present. Through reading and composing, I have learned how to integrate and synthesize information that I have read into a concise and effective written form. In having to turn complex scientific findings into comprehensive and succinct language for a general audience, I have been able to immensely improve my ability to communicate. In terms of my professional career, I know that this skill will help me succeed as a future doctor in many ways. As a doctor, I will have to be able to communicate successfully with my patients and their families who will surely vary in ages, beliefs, and health background. So being able to communicate complexity in a simple way will definitely be a vital skill. In addition, as a medical professional I will have to constantly stay up-to-date with ongoing literature to ensure success in my profession. Both oral and written communication will be vital to my future as a great pediatric doctor and my time working through this research project has definitely augmented these skills in me.

In looking back on my entire research experience, I have realized that while scientific research studies may initially seem daunting because of their extravagance, they all only serve

one purpose and that is to make sense of the world around us, much like many other forms of literature. Research operates to show us what lies beyond a surface level of understanding. For example, one study I examined for my paper, detailed the complex role of the hormone leptin in childhood obesity. While the phenomenon of weight gain may seem to operate fairly simply, it has actually been shown to require multiple complex processes, such as homeostatic modulation of physiological systems and neuronal control of metabolic pathways. It always amazes me to see how complex our bodies are and how they function so efficiently even in our ignorance. I have truly grown to love and appreciate the research process. It allows me to go further in my academic studies and learn even more about the intricacies of the human body.

I would like everyone at UMD to share in my excitement, of taking their academics into their own hands, by exploring the current research that is being published daily, no matter what discipline of study interests them. Like I have mentioned previously, accessing and reading intensive research studies may seem daunting to most students, at first, but if they learn how easy it is for them to gain access through the UMD library resources, there will surely be more students that feel confident enough in taking this challenge and enhancing their learning capabilities, as I have. A great idea that can help achieve this goal is if the UMD libraries held and advertised “Library Resource Learning Sessions” that would teach students in an interactive way how to utilize the library resources available to them. These small sessions could be led by a librarian and utilize UMD student volunteers, that know how to use library resources, in order to help integrate young students into the research atmosphere. The volunteer students could then give testimonies of their experience with the resources to further encourage the exploration of knowledge. I believe the biggest challenge most students face is not knowing what is available to them and how easy it is for them to access it. I am truly grateful for all the resources offered

through UMD libraries that have allowed me to enhance my education here at Maryland and helped me complete this research paper on childhood obesity, which holds importance for me both academically and personally.