

Library Research Award 2011

Last spring semester, I had the opportunity to write a research paper on a particular topic of interest for my class, Applied Animal Physiology. At the start of the semester, Dr. Orlando posted a list of possible topics from which we could choose whichever interested us most. I reviewed all the potential topics and settled upon the topic of hibernation. I was required to research the effects hibernation has on the metabolic rate of the animal.

At first, I did not know how to approach this paper or the research that had to be done for this paper. After a few guiding lectures from the professor, Dr. Orlando, I was able to sit at my computer and search for the necessary sources. I mainly used online academic journals that were published by a team of researchers. I had a one source from the Journal of Experiment Biology and another from the Journal of Comparative Biology. For the background information on a particular enzyme, phosphofructokinase, I referred to a previous class taught by Dr. Simon.

Once I discovered a few sources, I had to evaluate whether or not these sources were credible sources or not. When I look at an online source, I look for a few aspects of that website or journal to ensure that this source is an accurate aid in my research. First I look to see if the source states the name of one or more authors. By releasing the names to the public, the website or journal is taking full responsibility for the information inside that document. Secondly, I look for a publication date. For journals to be published, they must be scrutinized by a peer review board. This peer review board checks for accurate information in addition to the typical grammar editing that will occur. Lastly, I look for any egregious grammatical errors. Any online publication that has been through the peer editing board will not have such errors.

When I had my sources and found them to be credible, I began writing the paper itself. While writing the paper, I ran into a problem. I found that I was unsure of how to cite my sources in the text. I brought this to the attention of my classmates and Dr. Orlando. Dr. Orlando was able to clear up the confusion. He sent out an email informing the class that the proper in text citation was last name and the year.

After I completed this research paper, I felt very accomplished with the work I have done. This topic was not an easy topic to research, yet I was able to pull off an A for the term paper. I feel that I have mastered the proper skills of researching and writing this type of paper. I now understand the process of determining credible sources and citing those sources in the text of my paper. This research experience has given me the confidence to write similar papers in the future.