

Essay

Coming from a background of working as an hourly in a local library, I have become accustomed to using library resources when it comes to schoolwork. So when I received a paper assignment in my ENST 440 Crops, Soils and Civilizations class, I knew exactly where to go. Our assignment involved relating historical environmental issues discussed in Donald Hughes' Pan's Travail to a modern case of environmental exploitation. My main interest in environmental science involves wildlife management, and so I decided to compare the wildlife depletion that Hughes described to the more recent overexploitation of the American bison. For this paper I was required to use at least ten sources, including Pan's Travail, and so I turned to the library services at the University of Maryland.

My main source was Hughes' book itself, which I had checked out from the McKeldin Library a few weeks prior to the assignment. For the rest of my sources, I turned to the University of Maryland's online resources to search for more reliable sources than I would have found by simply browsing the Internet. My main strategy was to focus on peer-reviewed sources since they were more likely to provide accurate information. After that I tried to limit my search to government sources or other reliable sources of information.

While I did not seek any additional help from a librarian, I did rely on information I gathered when our introductory English class was instructed on how to use the library services here at the university. With this information, I was able to narrow down my search more easily using more specific search methods. From the sources I gathered, I first compiled and downloaded any available documents and read through each to make sure they contained pertinent information. This process had to be repeated several times as I worked on the paper and developed a better idea of how I wanted to direct my information.

This paper, although quite interesting, was a bit challenging. While the majority of the information I required about historical environmental problems was provided in the Hughes book, it was difficult to find additional sources when I had limited my description of modern environmental problems to one species. I had to return to the library's online search engine multiple times to gather a substantial number of sources for the foundation of my paper. From this challenge, I learned that it is often effective to be less specific with a search query when looking for information on something as specific as a single species. This method will be very useful to me in the future as I pursue a degree in Environmental Science with a concentration in Wildlife Ecology and Management, as I will likely need to research singular species in the future.

While sometimes the number of papers I am required to write for my classes can be daunting, I do enjoy writing, especially when I can adjust a paper assignment to fit within my interests. Still, in my experience, one of the most difficult parts of paper writing is finding viable sources to base my argument off of. Working in conjunction with the University of Maryland's online sources, especially their online search engine, has proved extremely helpful in making this search a more fruitful process.