

Sarah Ann Singer (110 385 714)

Library Award for Undergraduate Research Essay

I became interested in studying women's education at Maryland after learning about the differences between public and private university education for women in the nineteenth century in Dr. Jessica Enoch's WMST458R: Literature by Women After 1800: History of Women's Rhetoric class. Dr. Enoch's class reviewed various styles of nineteenth century women's education – self-education through parlor manuals; single-sex domestic education through private institutions; single-sex German-model education through private institutions; privately funded co-education; and public education; my personal experience as a woman in the Maryland public education system encouraged me to reexamine its history. As a double major in Women's Studies and English, I have a personal interest in the politics surrounding sex education and in turn was first drawn to the idea of exploring the history of sex education for women in public universities.

This project required a search for both archival and secondary, supporting sources. I searched for my main archival sources by exploring the ArchivesUM website and visiting the archive in person to ask questions. I examined the digitized course catalogs and yearbooks in order to learn about the courses offered to women students over time and how women students were thought of in the campus community. I considered assessing the ArchivesUM collections on Maryland President Alfred F. Woods, early women students Elizabeth Hook and Charlotte Vaux, and Home Economics teacher Agnes Saunders as a means of understanding these individuals' roles in women's education at Maryland; instead, I used these names as search terms for gleaning the effect of women's education on the local community. Google Books served as a useful source for locating outside writings by Woods and others important to women's educational evolution. Correspondingly, I examined countless secondary sources because I found it challenging to determine the usefulness and importance of particular sources until I narrowed my research questions. Research Port databases such as America: History and Life with Full-Text; Gender Watch; JSTOR; and ERIC provided a diverse picture of the existing scholarly conversation about women's education at land-grant institutions; in addition, books from McKeldin Library's immense catalogue introduced me to other important scholarship surrounding the development of public university education, the politics of east-coast vs. west-coast women's education, and early women's college teachers.

I sought assistance from two library research experts which helped guide the direction of my project. Ms. Elizabeth Novara, Historical Manuscripts, organized a tour of ArchivesUM for my ENGL458R class and illuminated the diverse array of materials surrounding women's education and the history of women's scholarship at Maryland. Ms. Novara highlighted scrapbooks created by Maryland women students; letters between women from Maryland during the Civil War; photographs of female students; and materials from Adele H. Stamp's tenure, including a guide for the proper decorum for female students. Ms. Novara's inspired explanations of these artifacts motivated me to research the kind of education received by women students at Maryland. In addition, Mr. Jason Speck, Assistant University Archivist, personally changed the direction of my project. After much database research, I was having difficulty locating curricular resources from Maryland's earliest years; Mr. Speck kindly

informed me that the infamous campus fire of 1912 resulted in an incredible loss of materials, including those with which I desired to work. Mr. Speck's vast knowledge of existing archival materials led me to study past course catalogs, which are both easily accessible and readily available, in order to learn more about the types of classes offered to the first women at Maryland.

I benefited immensely from my research experience through the University of Maryland Library System. My positive interactions with librarians at ArchivesUM boosted my confidence as a student and made me feel as if I was capable of contributing new, exciting research to a receptive scholarly community. I would never have been able to learn about the intricacies of the land-grant program without the vast assortment of articles and books from Research Port and McKeldin Library. My study of early Maryland women's course curricula inspired me to begin a related senior thesis project, which will study the effect of the 1989-2010 Curriculum Transformation Project on the evolution of English Department course offerings. I hope to apply all that I have learned and to continue my exploration of the history of women's education in a Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Composition in fall 2013.

Thank you kindly for your consideration of my application for this award.