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Last semester I had the opportunity to work on a research project as part of an independent study with Professor Scott Kastner. Having enjoyed Dr. Kastner's course on US-China-Taiwan relations, I enrolled in the independent study to learn more about Chinese foreign relations. My choice of research topic was inspired by events which transpired in East Asia. From reading *the Washington Post* I had taken notice of the tensions brewing between China and Japan over a set of islets in the East China Sea called the Senkaku/Diayou Islands. Once protests emerged in China over Japan's "nationalization" of the islands in September, I knew the dispute would be an interesting topic. Ultimately the purpose of my research would be to assess the possibility of escalation in this island dispute between China and Japan.

With a topic in mind, my first step was to access the library research port. Ever since librarian Judy Markowitz gave my GVPT200 class a tutorial on using the research tools available on campus, the database I have used the most is Academic Search Premier. After simply typing "Senkaku" into the search bar on Academic Search Premier, the first article listed in the results caught my attention. Written by Min Gyo Koo, the article gave an outline of previous flare-ups in the dispute. Being that it was published in *the Pacific Review*, an authoritative academic journal, I was confident in the article's quality. Seeking more information on the history of the island dispute, I turned to the references at the end of the article, something I commonly do to find additional sources. I then noticed an article by Erica Downs and Phillip Saunders, the latter of whom with Dr. Kastner has written several papers. Thanks to the library website, locating this article was an easy task. Using the "looking for a specific article?" tab on the research port, I entered the journal name, and the year the article was published. I was then able to view all issues of *International Security* via JSTOR, and navigated to the article I was looking for. For additional sources I also like to look for works from scholars with whom I am previously

familiar. Having owned a book by China scholar Peter Hays Gries, I visited his website and found an article from *the China Quarterly* in his list of works, which I then pulled from JSTOR using the same method described above.

Beyond my preliminary searches, my research was guided largely by Dr. Kastner. In our weekly meetings I would voice ideas I had in mind, and Professor Kastner would suggest authors whose work would be helpful. Initially I had planned on dedicating much of the research to the economic ties between China and Japan, to assess what was at stake for both countries. Dr. Kastner suggested I instead focus on theories of war and the literature on China's use of force. Using Kastner's recommendations, I rented several books from the library. To do so I again used the library website, entering author names into the search bar on the front page. For example, after discovering that the McKeldin library had a copy of *New Directions in the Study of China's Foreign Policy*, a book with an article by Thomas Christensen, I jotted down the book's call number and went to McKeldin to find it on the stacks. I could not however rely solely on books and journal articles, given the recentness of the event. Interestingly, social media was quite helpful for finding recent news stories. I had begun following esteemed China scholar M. Taylor Fravel on Twitter, who regularly posted articles centered on the Diaoyu dispute. It was through Fravel's Twitter account that I found the articles from *The Asahi Shimbun* and *Kyodo News* included in my bibliography. Also useful was Factiva, the database available through the research port on which I could read major newspapers. Via Factiva I found the *Wall Street Journal* article about China's leadership change.

As it culminated with the most extensive research paper I have completed in my academic career, my independent study was certainly a valuable learning experience. One lesson I learned is that while researching a topic, it is important not to feel obligated to include

everything you find. Though I found many great articles on Sino-Japanese relations, had I included even just the major points of every piece I found, my argument would not have been as clear, and the cohesiveness of the paper would have been affected. The independent study also taught me not to get overwhelmed when faced with a long-term project. At the start of the semester I was somewhat anxious about how I would be able to balance the research with my other coursework. Yet by setting realistic goals for what to complete each week, I stayed on track and completed the paper in a reasonable time.

If there was one thing I could change about my research experience, I would have discussed the prospects for amelioration between China and Japan in the long-term. Unfortunately I did not have the time or space to include a section on this subject. Also, in discussing the history between the two, I should have included that Japan has told a white-washed version of history and never really acknowledged its transgressions against China during its occupation. As far how the library could be better for research purposes, I am very much satisfied with all the resources the library has to offer. However in discussing the library with my peers, I have found that not many people within my major rent out books, despite the wealth of sources available. While online sources are great, I really think my fellow GVPT majors are missing out by not taking advantage of these print materials. To encourage more students to utilize print sources, the library could offer an incentive. Perhaps for example if a student rents more than five books in a semester, they receive discount on a coffee in the McKeldin Footnotes Café.