

For the spring 2014 semester, I signed up for the class, HIST 436: Napoleon, the French Revolution, and the World. As an American history major, I find the French Revolution to be an interesting topic, especially given the contrasts with the 1776 American Revolution. For the essay due in April, I chose to write about the fall of the Bastille, specifically focusing on the lead-up and why it happened. Naturally, with a research paper, I used numerous sources. However, unlike other research papers I have written for other classes, I did not use any internet sources. Access to journal articles and print books through the UMD library made my paper's argument stronger and more credible than if my paper was comprised of mostly internet sources.

There are thousands of books and articles written about the French Revolution; it is one of most studied events in history. However, I was only focusing on what many consider to be the beginning of the Revolution. Finding sources wasn't too difficult, but weeding through them to find the right ones for my paper was a trickier process. Professor Sutherland, the professor for the course, gave suggestions for possible sources to use for an essay on the fall of the Bastille. I started with those sources, mostly all print books accessible through the library, and then branched out from there.

Rather than navigating the stacks to attempt to find the suggested books, as well as others of similar caliber, I used the library website to find the locations of each book. The library catalog is actually pretty easy to navigate and I use it for most of my projects needing print sources. However, I wish that more book titles were listed during a search. Whenever I write down a location of a book that seems to fit my research topic, I know that I'm going to find a lot more books in the same stack area that weren't listed in my original search despite the same topic. I'm not sure why this happens, but it's one of the reasons that I almost always physically go get my books rather than request them to be moved to the "Hold" location outside the

Circulation desk. I may have to use different search terms to locate the different books in the online catalog, but again, if they are the same topic, they should also be listed in the search. Luckily, I was able to find the books that Professor Sutherland suggested, along with a few others.

After I looked at the library's catalog, I turned to the Research Port. JSTOR is a lifesaver for history majors like me. It's very easy to navigate, especially since some of Professor Sutherland's suggestions were articles. When I already know the journal and article title, it is easy to search for that specific article. However, when I do not have a specific source in mind, JSTOR is harder to use since it is not technically a search engine. Fortunately, I was able to find quite a few articles on the fall of the Bastille and the French Revolution through JSTOR, of which I used two in my essay as evidence of my argument.

After looking through the print sources and JSTOR articles for my research paper, I found that I had all the important information and had no need to look online for additional sources. I knew that I had found credible sources. In many of the class sessions for HIST 436, Professor Sutherland referenced Lefebvre, Rude, and Godechot, and it quickly became apparent that these were some of the top historians of the French Revolution. Four of the sources listed in my bibliography are by these historians (some were recommended by Professor Sutherland). With quite a few sources written by credible experts in the field, I knew that my paper would be reliable and full of true information based on their research.

Throughout this research process, I learned how to use sources more effectively. I was able to intertwine my idea of the Bastille's fall being connected to crowd psychology with the ideas of historians in the various sources. I pulled out different pieces of evidence, such as the price of bread, specific dates and events, and quotes from the historians, and was able to use

these pieces of evidence to back up my argument and make it more credible. In addition, the fact that all of my print sources were peer-reviewed adds credibility to my argument, and was a major reason these sources were chosen.

I enjoyed writing the paper for HIST 436 and conducting the research for it. I know that with every research paper I write, I am increasing my research skills and learning more and more. I look forward to conducting more research throughout my post-graduate education and career.