The University of Maryland's library resources played an integral part in the success of the research we did regarding the National Parks Service's sustainability initiative: The Green Parks Plan. We utilized the library in all steps of our research, from the initial brainstorming to creating a polished final product. Because of the assistance and support of this academic institution, our original 26-page research paper received the highest possible marks from the faculty of the School of Public Policy.

Our research began by choosing an issue to analyze for an integrated analysis project for our sustainability class with Dr. Robert Sprinkle. We are passionate about the outdoors and have enjoyed many visits to National Parks. When Dr. Sprinkle presented a primary source in class that referenced Theodore Roosevelt and his initiative to create the National Parks Service (NPS), we knew that we had a possible topic.

Using the high-speed internet connection and first class computing power available at McKeldin Library, we delved into the history of the NPS. We conducted our research in the inviting, supportive environment of the Terrapin Learning Commons. We combed through press releases and newsletters in search of information about the NPS' efforts to become more sustainable. Through our research, we learned that in 2012, they launched the Green Parks Plan, which aims to reduce their impact on the environment and integrate sustainable practices into every aspect of their operations. We chose to focus our project on the Green Parks Plan, specifically its transportation initiative.

Of course, choosing our topic was just the beginning. From there, a long road of research lay ahead. We continued to use the internet and computer resources provided by McKeldin Library to discover important sources for our research paper. When selecting which sources to draw from, we attempted to use as many primary ones as possible. When evaluating which sources to use, we considered the following questions: Where is this source coming from? How current is it? Do any other sources contradict the information it presents? What bias might influence the author(s)? Because of the rigorous set of requirements we established, we discarded many sources before finding ones that we deemed suitable. The computers and reliable internet connection at McKeldin allowed us to quickly gather all of the possible sources that we might be interested in using; without these tools at hand, it would have been impossible for us to create such a strong foundation for our analysis.

The majority of our sources are documents released directly by the NPS, executive orders given from the White House, and studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency. Because these sources were not tainted by bias from third parties, we were able to be creative and original in our analyses of the Green Parks Plan without fear of simply regurgitating opinions from political pundits. While it may have been easier or quicker to only read news articles and opinion pieces about our topic, it would not have led to the ground-breaking, imaginative masterpiece that we aspired to create.

Throughout the process of conducting our research on the Green Parks Plan, we sought assistance from the University of Maryland School of Public Policy's faculty. Dr. Robert

Sprinkle's presentations on best practices in sustainability inspired us to consider the efficacy of the Green Parks Plan in both environmental and social sectors. By taking this multi-faceted approach, our analysis was more complete and well-informed that it otherwise would have been. We also interacted with Todd McGarvey, a MPP candidate in the School of Public Policy who was a teaching assistant for our course on sustainability. Todd helped us hone our research by encouraging us to focus on one specific aspect of the Green Parks Plan instead of attempting to tackle the 9 point mega-initiative. By taking his advice, we were able to provide detailed, specific analysis instead of getting lost in the details of an enormous quagmire of government red tape.

Research such as this will continue to be a part of our lives, as we pursue careers with public policy think tanks in Washington D.C. leading-edge architecture firms in developing new sustainable practices. This research experience taught us important lessons that will help further both of our academic and professional careers. First, it showed us the importance of seeking help from mentors. Analyzing the NPS' Green Parks Plan was an extremely difficult undertaking, and it would have been easy to lose focus on such a large project or not even know where to start. However, with the help of Todd and Dr. Sprinkle, we were able to approach this ambitious endeavor with complete confidence.

Additionally, this project taught us the value of carefully selecting sources. Although it was difficult and often times frustrating to spend hours looking for primary sources that had significant substance, it was far more rewarding in the end. This practice allowed our research to be independent and original. When conducting research in the future, we will continue to employ this practice which will make our research powerful, useful, and innovative in our respective fields.

In the future, we plan to strengthen our future research endeavors by utilizing the resources at the Undergraduate Writing Center. By meeting with advisors early on to discuss the outline for our paper, the placement of sources, and the proper method for citing, the process of writing papers will be much easier and smoother. By doing so, we will hit the ground running with the writing process instead of struggling for hours to come up with a suitable thesis.

The University of Maryland's library resources played an instrumental role in our analysis of the Green Parks Plan. We are grateful for all the support and assistance that library staff and faculty provided, and look forward to working with them in the future to make fearless discoveries that push boundaries and set new standards.