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My research project for Eliza F. Messenger began as a class assignment for English 379Z. First, we were to research a lesser-known suffragist and write a biography about her. Then, we were to create a research poster and present our work at the Undergraduate research fair. Finally, we wrote an essay reflecting on the experience. My professor, Jessica Enoch, coordinated with a UMD research librarian named Liz Novara, who prepared a research guide for our class. This guide compiled relevant resources with a variety of databases containing primary sources. Liz Novara's guide was integral in my own research process, as it allowed me to navigate historical databases with ease.

I began my research with a few pieces of information - her name was Eliza Messenger, she was from Caroline County Maryland, and she was a representative at a suffragist convention sometime from 1900 to 1920. I began my research in the Biographical Database of Militant Woman Suffragists, in which I found nothing pertaining to Eliza Messenger. From there, I searched a variety of books on suffragists and found very little. At this point, I began looking through the census, though I was only able to find one Eliza Messenger from Federalsburg, Maryland in the 1900 record. She was listed to have been born in May 1840 and widowed with two sons, making her 60 at the time the information was recorded. As I address in my reflective essay for English 379Z, I was uncertain that this was the same Eliza Messenger that attended a suffrage convention in Maryland because she was deceased during the silent sentinel protests. At this point in my research, I sought assistance from my professor, Jessica Enoch, our teaching assistant, Katie Bramlett, and the librarian helping us with the project, Liz Novara. With the help

of my professors and the University librarian, I was able to compile a few more leads. However, it was not until I began reaching out to external archives and libraries that I found more tangible sources.

Following the recommendation of Liz Novara, I began directly contacting archives and libraries in the area about my research. I received a reply from each of these places, but none that led me to any primary sources pertaining to Eliza Messenger. The larger libraries and collections that I contacted were too broad to have any information on such a specific person, who only attended a suffrage convention once as a community representative. While discussing my research with my mother, she recommended that I focus on Eliza Messenger's involvement in the community. While broad collections were lacking in documents about her, perhaps community records could hold more information. I began by calling churches in Caroline county, who then referenced me to the local government. After several more calls, I was forwarded to the Denton Public Library. Jane Terebey, a Denton librarian, replied to my research inquiry with several articles from the *Denton Journal* that mention Eliza Messenger under the name "E. F. Messenger". Additionally, another librarian from the Denton library found an article in that same publication reporting on a 1906 suffrage convention in celebration of Susan B. Anthony's eighty-sixth birthday. With these sources, it seemed that the Elizabeth Messenger who I had found initially in that first census record was the same that attended the 1906 convention in Baltimore.

From the sources in the *Denton Journal*, I learned that Eliza Messenger was actively involved in her community as a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Many of the articles related to her were about WCTU meetings, or financial arrangements. She was

almost certainly supported suffrage, as the WCTU advocated for women's rights. Therefore, these sources confirmed that Eliza Messenger was a community leader and suffragist. In my research process, UMD databases and research guides were important first steps to finding documents. Additionally, the help of my professors and UMD librarians helped focus my research early on. The suggestion of my mother, which led to the help of Denton public librarians, however, finally helped me to confirm and understand Eliza Messenger's involvement in the suffrage movement. They aided me in accessing primary documents directly recording her community involvement, thus helping me to create a cohesive narrative about her life.

In terms of sources, I mainly used primary resources in my research. I was only able to find direct documents from her time period that discussed her life. Census records, newspapers, vital records, and membership catalogues are what allowed me to create a workable narrative of her life. I accessed each of these primary documents through University of Maryland databases, thus, the credibility of my sources can be assured. If I had to change anything about what I encountered, I wish that I could have more easily searched certain databases. For example, the MSA's Newspaper Digital Archive is not text-searchable. I was able to adapt to this obstacle by using the text-searchable newspaperarchive.org to search for specific articles with Eliza Messenger mentioned, though the website required a paid account to actually access the text. I then used the MSA's archive to pull up the full newspaper by date, thereby navigating the archive with what resources I had. Thus, I would change it so that the MSA Archives, and other archives, had records that were text-searchable. I completed this research project during my first semester at the University of Maryland, as I had recently transferred from the College of Southern Maryland. Therefore, this research project helped introduce me to the research

resources available to University of Maryland students. It also taught me about searching databases, contacting archives and libraries, and combining sources into a composite narrative. As an English and History major interested in working as a librarian, this project was vital in introducing me to the processes associated with the field. Not only did I learn how to access information and navigate databases, but I also more deeply understand the importance of librarians in aiding the research of others.