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Instructor: Dr. Ronald Luna

University of Maryland Library Award for Undergraduate Research Essay:

In spring 2014, I wrote my research paper, “Inhospitable Welcome: Hispanic Immigration to the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area since 2000.” My instructor was Dr. Ronald Luna for “Geography 413: Migration - Latin America and the United States.” The class explored the Hispanic Diaspora to the U.S. from the past to the present day. For the course capstone paper, students researched at least three issues facing one or more Latin American nationalities, now living in a city/metropolitan area of the U.S. Lastly, the paper’s rubric required the use of U.S. Census data to create a demographic profile of the Hispanic immigrants in that area. The paper counted for 22% of the overall grade for the course.

I selected my GEOG 413 research topic because of a *60 minutes* broadcast segment that I saw about the demise of shopping malls across the country. The story reported that these mall closures were due to poor attendance and low revenues.<sup>1</sup> Despite this trend, shopping malls were thriving in Atlanta, Georgia because they were catering to Hispanic immigrants’ tastes and shopping trends. I found this news segment fascinating because we had learned in class that the U.S. was always evolving, growing, and thriving due to its immigration. Using 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data, I developed a demographic profile of Hispanics within the Atlanta metropolitan area. Foreign-born Mexicans were the number one immigrant population with Puerto Ricans coming in second.

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<sup>1</sup> Strassmann, Mark. "A dying breed: The American shopping mall." 23 March 2014. CBS News: *60 Minutes*. 17 December 2014.  
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-dying-breed-the-american-shopping-mall/>>.

Next, I gathered research sources about Hispanic immigration to the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. Typically, I can find or request almost any E-publication, book or journal article from the University of Maryland-College Park (UMCP) McKeldin Library's databases. If I have a problem locating a reference, the library staff is always friendly and helpful. In this situation, I began my research with McKeldin Library's WorldCat UMD on-line catalog. Using key word searches, I found several relevant books with their associated Library of Congress call numbers. The next day, I travelled to McKeldin, and immediately went to the appropriate books' shelves. I found all of the necessary books and also picked up a few others off the shelf that were applicable. When I left, I had two bags full of source books. Most of these books were not recent, but they were only starting points. Quickly reviewing several books, I discerned that Hispanics had been immigrating to the southeastern U.S. with increasing frequency due to employment opportunities since 2000. Over a few days, I made more notes and obtained other references from the books' bibliographies. Finally, I met with Dr. Luna to ensure I was on the right track for my research question. He made a few comments but gave his approval. My research paper question was "What issues are affecting Hispanics in Atlanta, Georgia since 2000?"

To supplement my book sources, I gathered more recent data from up-to-date journal and internet articles again from McKeldin Library's WorldCat UMD catalog. I found several journal articles that filled in the gap about current issues facing Hispanics in the southeastern U.S. In addition, I searched Google.com for relevant charts, maps, and data about Atlanta's school districts, employment opportunities, and recent legislation, relating to foreign-born Hispanic immigrants. I evaluated every source to ensure each one was accurate, factual and reputable. For scholarly references, I relied on McKeldin Library's vetting of electronic journal articles and

other E-publications. I also scanned and accounted for any author bias within the books that I obtained from McKeldin Library. For internet searches, I did not use electronic sources with questionable information or opinions such as Wikipedia. I primarily used government, news, and data-driven internet websites. As I researched, I ensured that I kept scrupulous notes to track quotes, statistics, and sources. I also began to discern a pattern of hostility, anti-immigration laws, and discrimination against Hispanic immigrants in the areas of employment, education, and upward mobility. From all of the researched information, I created an outline for my paper.

Next, I began writing my paper. While I kept my research question in front of me as a guide, I used or discarded my notes according to my outline. I also used Microsoft Word's Citation and Bibliography formatting to cite sources, according to the Modern Language Association style. I concluded that anti-immigrant laws and discrimination are short-sighted because foreign-born Hispanic immigrants are vital to Atlanta's job market. I rewrote the paper several times. Reviewing my best edited draft, Dr. Luna made a few recommendations to improve the paper. With his input, I made revisions and turned in the final version. The research, hard work, and consultation with Dr. Luna paid off in an "A" paper.

I learned a great deal from the research experience. A student's research practices will make or break a paper. Instead of an opinion piece, the student should answer a research question with facts and data. Thus, research requires time to identify credible sources, take notes, and correctly cite those sources. I only use McKeldin Library, which I find is a great resource for research. Still, McKeldin can always improve its practices. Since I was a transfer student, I bypassed the first year English 101 – Library Day. Thus, I rely on my previous knowledge of library operations; however, I am open to learning more. Other transfer students might benefit from a voluntary one-hour orientation/tour about the UMCP libraries. The

electronic FYI automatic digest or The Writing Center could advertise the orientation/tour, which could occur once at the beginning of each semester. With instruction on effective use of library resources, students can only benefit. Reflecting on the experience, I now would contact a McKeldin librarian to investigate other references that I might use for my research. Otherwise, I was satisfied with the availability of resources and the library experience. I also valued Dr. Luna's advice and insight.