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Library Scholarship

I began my research with prompting from my English101S professor. We were asked to write a list of social injustices that make us angry. After coming up with a list of these, I decided to write about the gender wage gap – an issue that will affect me as soon as I graduate from college and have a real job. After deciding on this topic I began to do some preliminary research, gathering basic information about the topic and seeing what some common opinions were about this. Before delving deeper into legislature and possible changes I wanted to make sure that I had a good base knowledge. The greatest tools that I utilized were the library databases. They contain so much information and finding information pertinent to the gender wage gap was made much easier because of them. I found so many sources that I could utilize in my paper and it was relatively simple to do so because of the library websites.

Besides utilizing the databases, I also had the opportunity to work with Charissa Powell who gave myself and my peers an in depth tutorial of all that the University of Maryland libraries had to offer. She was extremely helpful in distinguishing between reliable sources and those that should not be used. By having class time in the library, I could benefit from the knowledge that Charissa had to share. When I was struggling to find sources that were reliable, she helped me use key words to narrow my search of the extensive databases. Charissa also helped me to become aware of other things that could help improve my writing. She advised me to look at newspaper articles about the gender wage gap and also to look at how other countries deal with the gap. Since I was examining the gender wage gap specifically in the United States, looking into the gap in other countries helped me to see what the United States compares to. Having Charissa as a resource was really beneficial to my research experience.

Once I had my sources and was trying to evaluate which ones were reliable, I employed various different methods. First I looked at the author and his or her credentials. By figuring out what organization they worked at or who they were writing for, I could see if they could be trusted. I also took note of when the article was published, articles that had been published ten years ago, are probably not as reliable as those published more recently so I tried to stick to articles that had been published with five years. The final method that I used was ensuring that the source that the article came from was reliable. If it came from someone's personal blog that would most likely not be a good source to use but a .gov or a .edu url would be considered a pretty good source to use. By keeping all of this information in mind, I was able to find and use reliable sources.

The best thing that I learned during this process was how to utilize all that the library has to offer. Had I not had the experience of taking this class and having class time in the library I would have never been aware of these great resources. Having thousands of databases at my fingertips is a privilege and I am lucky enough to have found it at the beginning of my sophomore year. Learning how to navigate these databases and the other resources that the library has to offer is extremely helpful for future research endeavors. As a psychology major, I will have to write many more research papers during upper level psychology classes and knowing how to use these is very helpful.

Since I have benefited so greatly from this, the only thing that I wish is that I would have known about these resources sooner. If I had this knowledge at the beginning of my freshman year, other research projects would have been made easier and finding information for class presentations would not have been as difficult. I think that one great way to raise awareness of how great these programs are would be to have a library day in each on of the Univ100 courses.

Those courses are designed to help freshman students adapt to college life and telling these students about the library resources would help make their transition to the classroom easier. The information that they are provided with is a privilege to have and most people are not even aware of what they are offered. Implementing this into the Univ100 curriculum will have more students using the resources that they are lucky to have. Another thing that I would like to see happen would be awareness of the sharing of resources between Big 10 universities. It is pretty amazing that schools all across the country can utilize the resources of other institutions and I think that this information should be more heavily advertised.