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Initially, I thought I wanted to write my final paper on how birth order affects individual personalities. However, after our freshman English class visited the library and learned about the different resources available from the librarian, I began to rethink my topic. I wanted to research an issue of importance to me so I decided that I would write about the glass ceiling in the sciences and tie in my personal experiences with it (as a female actively involved in the sciences). I personally prefer to use book sources rather than online sources so being able to check out over a dozen books at one time was very helpful! To locate the books in McKeldin Library's extensive collection, I used the basic online catalog search and typed in key words such as "gender equality," "science glass ceiling," and "women obstacles in science." I came across an abundance of very helpful academic sources, which informed my thesis.

Fortunately, the floor plan for all the different levels of the library was posted online so I was able to locate the books without any need to ask for help from the front desk. While finding my books, I even came across a few new quiet study spaces! One issue that I encountered with my sources was that women wrote most of the books I was finding. This posed an issue of perspective, as there is a significant bias when women write on the topic, which could potentially weaken my argument. I began to look more extensively into finding male authors on my topic to ensure that I was evaluating the issue from all angles so that my argument was as strong as possible.

When evaluating my sources, I looked into the quality of writing and how the information was presented. I wanted clear sources so that I could easily extract data, which I could use in support, or even refute in my paper. I also did some research on some of the authors to ensure that their background was appropriate and they had no extreme biases with the issue (other than the fact that some were women scientists). I also had to ensure that the information in each source was pertinent to my argument so that I would not go off on tangents in my final paper. Lastly, I evaluated when the book was published—as this issue was not a recent emergence—to confirm that the data presented was as current as possible. Essentially, I evaluated the quality of the source by looking at the author, publication year, and how the information presented.

While conducting research for my final paper, I learned that the University of Maryland offers many resources to assist me in my future endeavors such as having a book from a different campus mailed to the library where I can simply pick it up. I am certain that this will be a very useful tool for me as I continue my college career here at the University of Maryland. I am grateful that this paper was written in my first semester here as I found it to be very helpful because now I know a lot about the Maryland libraries and I know this information will help me as I continue my education here.