

In my first semester of my sophomore year, I received my first assignment in my upper division political science class to write a research paper. In typical fashion, I was unaware of all that the university had to offer. My professor had mentioned that I could contact a librarian to help in the research process. I was very confused. I already knew how to search for books in the library, why was my professor sending me to see a librarian? Although confused, I went and spoke to a librarian about the research process. She first showed me the Journal Articles and Databases tab. I was completely blown away. I had no idea that I could access the amount of information that she presented.

Prior to the exhibition of information, I was in a complete state of panic. The topic of my paper was Argentine human rights abuses in the 1970's—a myopic topic in scope. I anticipated a lengthy process of piecing together information from larger works that would be inefficient. As such, I very willingly contacted the librarian hoping I would find content that would not derail me from my topic of interest. I never anticipated finding, not only profuse articles, but detailed to the point that I had to whittle them down reminding myself that I was writing an undergraduate paper and not a graduate dissertation.

When I began researching, I immediately gravitated toward Academic Search Premier and JSTOR. After choosing several articles and going through them I looked at the work cited for the article and noticed that other similar articles were in major academic journals. The Journal of Human Rights—which I had no idea existed, provided a great starting point. What made the research truly extraordinary was the use of primary sources. To actually read interviews with those who had been forcibly kidnapped and readopted, made the entire endeavor personal and applicable to a broader range of people and served to bring the atrocities of a nondescript South American country to the forefront of

consciousness for all who read my paper. The depth of the literature was truly spectacular. I had the means to fully discuss all aspects of the violent regime. Through first hand accounts taken at demonstrations, access to excerpts from books written in Argentina, and the amount of information on each topic, I was able to get an unbiased and scholastically rich set of documents. Choosing my sources was a difficult task. I distinctly remember sitting on the floor of the library and making piles: “political culture”, “media”, “interview rich” etc. After reading them, I discarded many of the articles that did not support their ideas with other works. I also got rid of any works that seemed biased or lacked peer-review. To be incredibly biased and to surpass that by lacking peer-review is to produce a work that is not scholarly and barely above a tabloid. Such works had no room in my paper. My paper was to be a passion-fueled, factually based, thorough analysis of the era and nothing less. The databases changed my view on the entire era and the scope of the human rights abuses. By reading the first hand accounts, I became more aware of the reality of the situation and thus could convey those ideas with the support of a victim and all of the weight that the statements would carry.

The element of the journal articles and databases allowed me to find content specific scholarly sources that directly impacted the caliber of my research paper. It allowed me to write a very detailed, yet scholastically diverse, piece of writing. I was not limited by the content but freed by it. The amount of information allowed me to venture into more specific content—such as first hand accounts on abuse and domestic police within the state. Initially, I thought I would have to change my topic due to a lack of information. I was more than pleasantly surprised that I could access a body of work directly relevant to my

career goals in life—to be a human rights lawyer. Suffice to say, I have continued to use this search option in all my academic endeavors.