

## **Library Research Prize: Description of Research**

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During my sophomore year, I found the inspiration for my honors project through my job as a work study in WML's Digital Services Department. During the 1900s, people compiled scrapbooks documenting the reporting of the local press on the University of Scranton, ranging from coverage of athletic events to announcements about new presidents. Because of their valuable insight into the University's past, Digital Services decided to make them available online. My tasks as a work study involved taking the scanned images of scrapbooks and isolating each newspaper clipping to prepare it for online publication. In my work, I found a collection of articles about coeducation and the debate over whether the University should admit women, which sparked my interest in the topic.

To write my thesis, I used many of WML's collections. First, to learn about women in higher education in order to provide a context within which I could approach the University, I used WML's extensive collection of books and e-books. Additionally, if I found a book relevant to my research that WML did not have, I could request it through Inter-Library Loan (ILL). ILL proved invaluable to my research, as it allowed me to utilize resources easily and quickly from throughout the state instead of being limited to the books housed in WML. I also used the online databases, particularly JSTOR, for scholarly articles about women in higher education to provide additional background information.

Next, I used the Archives & Helen Gallagher McHugh Special Collections. Since a comprehensive study on coeducation at the University had never been done before, I relied on the primary sources at the Archives to gather information. I spent countless hours pouring over the enrollment statistics booklets, sifting through the correspondence between administrators from Marywood and Scranton about their short-lived cooperation, comparing Student Handbooks as *in loco parentis* policies were relaxed, and reading the meeting minutes of the Board of Trustees and the University Senate to discover the issues of contention over admitting women. Michael Knies and Colleen Farry, the two archivists, worked tirelessly to help me locate these sources. Often, I went to them with a vague idea about what I wanted to include in my project and they provided the concrete resources that fit my description. They

were always happy to help, and their assistance allowed me to discover sources that I would not have found on my own.

Finally, I used the Library's Digital Collections, resources from the Archives which have been made available online. These primary sources supplemented the archival material I used and greatly broadened my understanding of coeducation at Scranton. The newspaper clippings documented the debate over whether the University should admit women and its eventual decision to become coed. They reported on the creation of a women's athletic program, the opening of ROTC to women, the experiences of the first women students, and the growth of the institution after coeducation. I also used the *Aquinas*, the student-run newspaper, because it offered student reactions to coeducation and the resulting changes. I utilized the Public Relations Press Releases to learn about the school's expansion including the acquisition of buildings, the addition of majors, and record enrollments after the admission of women, and the Yearbooks to find out about women's involvement in clubs, athletics, and campus life in the decade after coeducation. Finally, I used some of the website's features, particularly the University Timeline and the presidents' biographies, to gather information on what was happening generally at Scranton during the 1970s.

Through my research project, I discovered that WML serves as so much more than a place to study, borrow books, and print papers. While I had learned about some of WML's resources, including its extensive book collection and its many helpful databases in previous research assignments, this project reaffirmed the importance of such resources and taught me that they were only a small fraction of the tools offered at WML. Aided by the helpful and knowledgeable librarians, I found that I could request books through ILL, learned about the most effective ways to return relevant search results, and discovered that WML houses many resources documenting the rich history of the University, both physically in its Archives and online on its website. Because of the abundance of resources offered by WML and the support of the librarians, I was able to turn my idea sophomore year into a detailed, comprehensive history of an important part of the University's past. As I graduate from college and enter my professional career, I am confident that I have the knowledge and ability to effectively and thoroughly complete research projects because of my experiences at WML.