

Graduate year in the occupational therapy (OT) program presented us with the daunting task of completing a research project on the history of a singular topic throughout the profession. In years past, we heard stories about this paper depicted as a demanding portion of the semester. Despite the reputation of the ‘Rita paper,’ we were confident that we would meet the requirements of this assignment with ease using library personnel and resources.

Our historical analysis assignment required us to pick an event that evolved since the inception of the profession and shaped contemporary practice. The topic that we chose to trace through the decades was the history of low vision. Low vision is a passion of ours, though it has never been a topic used for this paper—adding to our stress about conquering this feat. The cornerstone of this assignment is that primary sources from each decade, since 1917, have to be located, analyzed, annotated, integrated, and synthesized. A major tool contributing to our success in finding primary resources was the microfilm on the second floor of the library. This would have been impossible without the patient librarians’ instruction on how to use the microfilms efficiently to optimize our research. Not only was microfilm a magnificent tool for finding resources too dated to be located in print, but few things were as satisfying as loading a microfilm reel correctly and independently for the first time.

As we were chasing down primary resources, we were deterred by our inability to determine exactly which journals to search for, as one journal of interest has changed its name three times since being founded. Instead of giving up, we immediately sought the advice of the librarian at the reference desk for help, who clarified the journal’s naming history and informed us about the Archives in the basement of the library. At the circulation desk, the librarians were equally as helpful and pleasant. They not only tolerated our confusing backstory about this journal, but proceeded to present us with several issues of the journal from any decade that we

requested. The Archives collection housed at our library is vast and impressive; there are few things we could not find. For the few obscure and dated materials not at our library, the InterLibrary Loan system proved to be an asset to our research. We remember thinking “we’re setting the librarians up with an impossible task” in searching for one out-of-print book, but, sure enough, they obtained this book within a few days.

As we progressed to more recent decades, it became evident that several seminal articles in low vision included legislation and policy changes. As OT students, legal material is certainly not our forte. Upon reflection, we still cannot decide if it was most difficult to locate, interpret, or cite these materials. Personnel at the reference desk became invaluable, as they introduced us to new databases to locate dated *Federal Regulations*, as an example. With their assistance, we were able to determine legislation related to major elements of our paper as well as proper citations for these materials. Normally, the *APA Manual* is an asset, but we found the examples of legal materials in the manual lacking and confusing. When in doubt, we turned to the reference desk for assistance, and we were never disappointed with their results.

By the end of this semester, we felt confident in our ability to utilize library resources to become savvy researchers and historical analysts. The environmental resources at the library created a comfortable atmosphere to complete our assignment without having to bring a pillow to sit on or camp out as previous OT graduate students have warned. The vast amount of study areas available offered an ideal meeting place for us to connect routinely each week as we completed our paper. After completing and conquering this task, we can truly attest to the ‘golden gem’ of a library that we have access to, both on campus and online. As we move on to our last semester before graduation, we both agree that library resources have made our years at Scranton memorable, and will leave us longing for access to library materials post-graduation.