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Kirmser Undergraduate Research Award

Freshman Individual Award

Reflective Essay on Library Research

During my first semester at Kanas State University in Fall 2016, I wrote a literature review on visual neglect as part of a University Honors Program contract-course for General Psychology for honors credit. With the help of my instructor Dr. Jessica Williamson in the department of Psychological Sciences, I came up with the goals of learning how to conduct literature research in psychology, developing the ability to digest and summarize research literature, and writing a literature review. As I progressed through my General Psychology class, I took note of topics we covered that I had an interest in learning more about. I was initially interested in the topic of agnosia, the inability to process sensory information, and wanting to find a less broad topic, eventually narrowed that down to visual neglect, and the specific subcategory of representational neglect.

To help figure how to best approach researching my topic, I set up an in-person consultation with Dr. Kendra Spahr in Hale Library, one of the Academic Services Librarians on the Social Sciences team. She helped me navigate and learn how to utilize the library's "Search It" function and databases like PsycINFO, PubMed, and Google Scholar, and how to use advanced search options and key words so that I could effectively find relevant research articles. I used key words "visual neglect" and its variants such as "spatial neglect" and "hemispatial neglect", and the narrower topic of "representational neglect." Having access through K-State libraries to those databases and the articles they provided was invaluable, as I could read a wide array of articles without worrying about paywalls or having to subscribe to journals to gain access. For the print journals I used, placing a hold on a book and being able to pick it up in a

short amount of time saved me the hassle and confusion of trying to search the stacks by myself to find a specific article, such as the journal that contained the article I used by Martha J. Farah.

My process of writing my literature review involved using Google Docs to keep track of my resources and their DOI URLs so that I could easily access them. After an initial search of the topic of visual neglect, I created an outline of how I wanted to progress through my literature review, which I modified as I did more research and narrowed down my specific topic to representational neglect. I then created an annotated bibliography that summarized and provided relevant information from each article. From there, I used all the information I got from my research articles and formatted it into essay form in a Word document.

One of the sources I used that helped inform me the most about the topic of visual neglect was Adair and Barrett's journal article "Spatial neglect: Clinical and neuroscience review." This article gave me a detailed background on the condition of visual neglect, including its characteristics, symptoms, and the process of diagnosis. The article also introduced the specific forms of neglect that have been discovered, including representational neglect, and helped lead me into further research on the topic. Given the value of this article, I looked at the various articles cited in their reference page as a point of other potential sources for my paper. As I conducted my research, I noticed when articles I read referenced the same authors and their papers, which helped me know that those articles were regarded as credible in the area of neglect research.

One of the challenges I faced was realizing the amount of time I had to put into reading each of the sources I found through the process of my research. Writing this paper was my first experience with extensive researching and synthesizing of a complex subject like visual neglect. Most research articles I read ranged from 6-10 pages in length with multiple sections. I also

wanted to efficiently read all my potential sources, while still being able to write summaries that accurately reflected the research done and that had enough relevant information in them.

Going through the process of researching and writing a literature review and learning how to utilize library resources in the Fall 2016 semester has helped me more efficiently and confidently write two additional literature reviews this Spring 2017 semester. In the process, I have also gotten better at knowing proper APA writing and citation guidelines. Having access to the library's databases and other helpful resources made the process of researching my paper an easy and knowledgeable experience.