LOC Reading and Research

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Write a 3-5 page document summarizing your experience in attending LOC. Include a section describing the benefits of the on-site research experience and how you think this experience assists students in growing as scholars.

What is the Benefit of OGS Group Trip to LOC?

 On the first day of the OGS’ Library of Congress visit, we arrived with a broad focus on the goal to emerge, over the next five days, with as sizeable chunk of knowledge in how to navigate and put to work a significant amount of the portion of the library’s resources that was going to be made available to us. But, in the midst of that, my personal goal was narrowed down to the acquisition of a probable cart-load of relevant material for use in the chapter two portion of my dissertation. To that end, I kept ever-present in my mind, the need to harvest sources that would support the advancement of the topic of my research. In that goal, I was focused strictly on “What” I needed. By mid-week, I was beginning to feel some measure of satisfaction that I had garnered a new set of research skills that would allow me to expand my toolbox in ways that would make me better equipped to locate hard-to-find sources. Still, the best of all, was my feeling of certainty that I would be emerging from the LOC trip with the knowledge and the means to literally determine “where on earth” to locate a particularly critical hard-to-find source material that is on a shelf somewhere in America. The idea is that if you can determine who owns something that you need, you might be able to borrow it. And it is at this point that I began to wonder whether it is the norm for research scholars to take part in trips to the Library of Congress or other great research centers as we have.

So far, I have found that not one of my colleagues from top universities such as Columbia, NYU, CUNY, Fordham, or Baylor do not get the opportunity to take part in a group trips to LOC or similar research centers. For OGS scholars, the trip was optional, and I myself opted to take part in the experience because I recognized that such a trip offered a once-in-a-lifetime largess of benefits in the form of a brand of information-gathering that would not otherwise be available to me. After six days, I left LOC with the ability to find information that I could not find in my local libraries; not in the standard research centers; nor by way of the standard online search engines.

Upon arrival, we were introduced to our pre-assigned reference librarian, Darren Jones. We were then taken to be photographed and officially registered as LOC readers. We then attended a pre-arranged onsite LOC class conducted by Mr. Jones. In his two-hour mid-morning lecture, Mr. Jones identified tools for accessing certain sources that were uniquely LOC based. In his lecture, he also gave kudos to the efficacy of “Google Scholar” and other such online search engines despite their limitations. He called our attention to the fact that some research activities, as well as some of the tools were only usable, or accessible for on-site research (at LOC). Furthermore, to access certain types of LOC off-site online tools, one would have to be a registered Library of Congress “Reader”. Since then, I have discovered how invaluable it is to have an LOC “Reader’s Card” that will continue to be active for two long years before needing renewal. Being able to do research from the vantage point of such historical magnificence is a privilege that many of today’s researchers and academics have only heard about. That is a big deal.

By week’s end, I had become increasingly aware that I had collected many more relevant sources that would become vital building blocks for my literature review storyboard than I had at first imagined. Also, I am now able to track down almost any source I need, through my new LOC tools. And the greater part of that new ability is that I will continue to have access to my LOC account even while I am at home.

Since my trip to LOC, whenever I am trying to find a particular source that is neither accessible through any of the popular search engines, nor available in any of my local libraries, I am able to fall back on my extra LOC tools to determine whether the source is a BIP or BOP, and whether it is shelved somewhere. If, for instance, the source material, in question, were a “book out of print” (BOP), housed only in LOC, there is a good chance that I might be able to obtain access to it on loan to a major reference library of near me. This is only possible because I still have an LOC account.

Further, to test my new-found ability to execute the process of finding sources by zip code, I will be able to use my LOC reader ID to gain access to, “World Cat,” through which Ill be able to locate it. During, and since my visit to LOC, I have deliberately selected a bunch of, what I consider, hard-to-find books by zip code. So far, I have had 100% success in locating the home-shelves of hard-to-find books by zip codes.

The first of these texts was the Buchner, R.D. (2008). *Building cultural intelligence (CQ): Nine mega skills.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall [**Seminal**] [**Amazon no-preview**]. The book appeared on one of developmental reading lists at OGS. But when I attempted to locate it through the usual online channels, I learned that there was no “full Access” to it. With that, I identified the book as “difficult”, if not, “impossible,” to find—a possible BOP. So, I decided to purchase the book but found that the Amazon suggested purchase-source did not have it. After that, a search revealed that the book was “in-shelved” at LOC, and I was able to follow that bit of intelligence with an “In-house request”. I read a few pages, but by doing that, it only peeked my interest. And the week ended without my being able to get back to it. But, at least, I knew what I had to do, and the fact was that I now had the means to do it. I needed to conduct a search to see whether it was also shelved somewhere in my zip code, so that when I am back home, away from LOC I would be able track down the book and continue reading the parts of it that were of particular interest to me.

At home, the following week, I conducted a series of New York City zip code searches on “World Cat”. There was no “in shelved” copy at the research centers where I had expected it to be—no copy at Columbia, none at NYU (where I did education), none at the local SUNYs, nor at the CUNYs, with the exception of one. There was a single copy of the book “in-shelved” at City College of New York’s (CCNY) general library—one ofmy *alma maters.*

Turning the pages of time once again back to the trip-week, it was finally, OGS last day at LOC. It was Saturday afternoon—Mr. Darren Jones’s day off. He had become my crutch. And although I did not say anything about my feeling somewhat left out, Dr. Hughes saw that I was a bit off balance. So, she came over and told me that she had arranged a consultation for me with a reference librarian named Laura. She introduced us and she (Laura) began to work with me. That was a good thing because I needed a few answers to questions about some self-assigned homework I had done the night before in the hotel. The help I got from Laura gave me the means by which to evaluate what I had done in the effort to improve my “storyboard”, and, at length, to determine what the corrigenda had been.

Except for the fact that Mr. Jones (our LOC senior reference librarian) had his day-off that Saturday, he had been my personal LOC lifeline throughout. And, with his help from Tuesday through Friday, I was able to find my way over and around much of the bumps and ruts I encountered while at LOC. In his initial admonition to us, that Tuesday, Mr. Jones stressed the great LOC imperative, “Ask a Librarian!” At first it seemed to have been an advice only deserving of the proverbial “prize bromide”, but it was not. It was a big deal. “Ask a Librarian!” actually turned out to be a research tool. As one might think, it is not merely the thing you do when you find yourself stumped while doing research at a library. It certainly was that, too. But it was also a research tool that everyone who possesses an LOC account has access to, not just for on-site research, but for anytime and anywhere, even while on the LOC website, the “Ask a Librarian!” option pops up when one is struggling with a research question that has to do with LOC. And so, in Mr. Jones’ absence, that Saturday, June 25, 2022, I got help from Laura, and later I was bold enough to ask for help from another African-American male librarian whose name I do not recall.

The LOC “process” was very unlike anything I had been exposed to during my brief experience with this level of research. I had exceeded my goal and the benefits were huge.

Before we left, LOC, I could see that I was acquiring some very useful practical research skills and that I was becoming quite nimble at navigating some of the special research instruments at LOC, and beyond, even though I was also getting to realize how vast was the LOC’s research machinery was, and that we could barely scratch the surface of its research tools and methods in that single week. Further, the trip has opened a door that has since been letting in a long stream of light into a pathway where I would not otherwise have been able to enter. In the end, because of this trip, I have acquired additional tools that would expand my facility to

1. Search and find articles and books in just about any of the known disciplines.
2. Request and retrieve articles and books that relate specifically to my research topic.
3. Email what I find to my own email as well as to save LOC sources on my flash drive.
4. Search and find out where and in any zip code an article or book needed is located.
5. Learn how to navigate and utilize “Primo” and “World Cat”.

The help and guidance I received from the professionals there, and from the

 organizational efforts of the two OGS professors went a long way in helping me get

to where I had planned to be by the end of my week at LOC. There were several reasons why I was able to accomplish what I had at LOC. The one-and-one sessions arranged for me with the reference librarian (Laura) by Drs. Hughes and Ward helped me make a huge addition to my research arsenal. What Laura did was to expand my research tool kit by introducing me to the additional LOC website, “https:/www.esesources. loc.gov.” However, I must say that the reference librarian assigned to OGS, Mr. Darren Jones, will continue to be my primary go-to person for as long as I have my LOC account and Mr. Jones telephone number. My Ha-ha moment came when a male reference librarian, not Darren, showed me how to search for the availability of possibly rare source materials “in shelved” at LOC and other libraries around the country by zip code.