Omega Graduate School

Library of Congress Reading and Research

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1. **Introduction**. The main goal of the graduate program at OGS is to help students develop skills to be utilized in the context of their professional backgrounds and callings to help bring about positive social change through Christian missionary work. Within that framework, this course, SR 848-64, is, technically, an OGS “elective” which is meant to give participants exposure to the highly advanced research techniques and tools that are only available at the Library of Congress. Because of the unique nature of this course, it is not placed in any special order with the OGS curriculum-sequence but it is an extra boost for students who are nearing the dissertation phase of the program.
2. **Personal Growth**. That first day, Mr. Darren Jones, a senior research librarian, introduced himself and the went directly into his two-hour, mid-morning lecture, identifying 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 “search engines” and research tools were only usable, or accessible for on-site research at LOC. We learned that in order 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 valuable 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 a research facility of such historical magnificence is a privilege that many of today’s researchers and academics have only heard of. 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 thought I would. 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 the exact research center in which it is shelved. 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 I would be able to locate it. During, and since my visit to LOC, I have deliberately selected a bunch of, what is considered, “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 the 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 Amazon, itself, did not have the book, and its suggested purchase-source did not have it, either. A subsequent 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”, myself, while at LOC. 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 return home, away from LOC, I would still be able track down the book and continue reading the parts of it that were of particular interest to me.

1. **Reflective Entry**. At home, the following week, I conducted a series of New York City zip code searches for the Buchner *CQ* texton “World Cat”. When I began the search, I expected to find that there was no “in shelved” copy at any of the college libraries in the Bronx or within a five mile radius of my 10469 zip code. But what was surprising was that, with the exception of one major research centers, in all of New York City, none had an “in-shelved” copy. World Cat showed me that there was no copy at Columbia University, none at NYU (where I completed my education requirements for state certification), none at the local SUNYs nor CUNYs, nor a Cornell University with the exception of one solitary major research center. Fortunately, the single “in shelved” copy in NYC, or any of the neighboring cities, was at the City College of New York where I did an MS in school administration and had retained membership in the research library, as an alumnus. Thanks to “World Cat”, I was able to finish the reading I had begun at LOC in the research library of one of my own *alma maters*. How big was that to me!?

The Buchner text on cultural intelligence, for one thing, is a seminal piece of work that points the way to the kind of cross-cultural interaction that happens on a daily basis between teachers and students. And while this book was a gift to people like me who had been an educator for forty years, thirty years of which I had spent working under the NYC DOE, it was going to be a useful addition to the references for my dissertation. I was beginning to see how this text was going to be helpful to me as I researched pertinent source material on my topic about the positive and negative cultural impact teacher have on their students outside of raw academics. The book *Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* by L. Delpit poses a question of how teachers manage to teach children who come from homes that are not like theirs.

1. **Future Expectation**. At Omega Graduate School, students are expected to demonstrate an appropriately high level of scholarship, educational maturity, and an ample array of the skills needed to be able to make contextual adjustment in the application of their professional backgrounds and callings, through the mechanism of Christian missiology, toward the goal of bringing about positive social change into communities anywhere. Because of that, the SR 848-64/ SR 802 DSL: Library of Congress Reading and Research “course” should definitely be listed as one of OGS “electives”. Students who are not able to make the trip should be required to do a similar course of study with a research librarian in their local library for credit. I would say, however, that OGS does need to arrange for a bit more advanced planning and preparation for students who elect to take the Library of Congress trip/course. The Sunday evening Zoom meeting should have been done several days before the actual trip.
2. **Conclusion**. I found SR 848-64 to be an invaluable course for students as they begin to move closer toward meeting the OGSs’ expectation by utilizing the unique research tool at LOC in bringing their professional background to bear on the Christian missionary work expected of OGSs’ graduates. The LOC trip is a bonus in research skill geared toward the ultimate goal make ready the graduates of OGS for the commission to

. . .preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, . . . recovering of sight to the blind [and], to set at liberty them that are bruised, [t]o preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19 KJV).

At the same time, Mr. Daren Jones lecture, the tour of the BOP section at LOC, and the students’ completion of the “Reader Card” registration process were invaluable for maintaining long-term contact with LOC. Because we were properly registered as LOC readers, we can continue to have access to the research tools and facility for the next two years with the option of renewing the card for continued access.

So far, I have been able to use LOC’s unique tools such as “World Cat” and “Primo” while not on site. Having the ability to locate the solitary research center that possesses a rare book or journal article is special for researchers in the infinite swarth of research fields, including education, religion, etc.