**Course Learning Journal**

SR 802-52-ALT OGS LOC Virtual Alternative

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Professor

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**Introduction**

For my Course Learning Journal I am asked to summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the DSL graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence. Regardless of this course’s position out-of-sequence within my particular program lineup, I have gained experience in the use of techniques that will serve as perpetual and monumental scholar-practitioner skills.

The DSL program is designed for scholar-practitioners, with an emphasis on the *practical* application of knowledge attained. It would have been wonderful for me to complete this L.O.C. course prior to my final DSL Action Research courses. However, for the first two years of my program a virtual/alternative option was not yet available; as a family caregiver I was unable to physically travel to Washington D.C. I am thus immensely grateful that a remote version of the course became available this summer.

The intent of the Library of Congress (L.O.C.) trip is to gather and organize scholarly literary sources and to interpret how they influence the understanding of the literature – in other words, its ability to support a central research thesis. I perceive that this course fits into the DSL program as a provider of practical skills, in order to make students better researchers and communicators from a faith-learning perspective.

**Personal Growth**

This course stretched me in many ways, most notably pertaining to the integration of faith and learning. Since my final DSL Action Research projects were already completed, I was no longer bound to the secular constraints placed upon me as I had been when researching our public healthcare agency. This newfound “religious freedom” provided an opportunity to learn more about faith-learning integration––in particular the ways that Christian schools differ from non-Christian learning environments.

I began to explore numerous e-catalogs and browser options available, which are graciously offered through the Library of Congress online. I was also able to correspond directly (by chat and email) with L.O.C. librarians! While certainly not as comprehensive and enriching as the on-site experience, I was nonetheless invigorated by my virtual relationship formed with the greatest library in human history.

No longer required to research literature that contributed to my DSL contextual interests, I found myself immediately stretched when I came upon the writings of Dutch Calvinists, who were intensely focused on precisely which factors distinguish Christian schools from other schools. Beginning with one Calvinist source, I was led to others––some from the early 1900’s. I found their writings on the subject fascinating.

**Reflective Entry**

While this course emphasized research to prepare students for the DSL Proposal Presentation (which I had previously completed), I was nonetheless able to utilize the skill-building exercises in ways that will be applicable to any area of research that I encounter. In addition, since I had already finished my final project it was refreshing for me to finally be free from prior secular restrictions, and to explore ideas about ways that Christian schools really do differ from non-Christian learning environments. Enveloping these distinctions within a strict Calvinist perspective provided me with a vast selection of well thought-out arguments and, admittedly, a few gasps of surprise at the stern assertions held by these bold Dutchmen. The experience ultimately provided pure enjoyment as I gathered, cited, and organized a body of research literature that was unrelated to that of my prior Action Research topic.

**Conclusion**

The DSL program’s catalog description states that this program is designed for scholar-practitioners, with an emphasis on practical application of knowledge attained. This is order to help OGS graduates become world changers. As a DSL student who completed my final research project prior to this L.O.C. course, it was a refreshing and invigorating experience to explore a topic unrelated to that of my Action Research thesis. Regardless of the original intent of the L.O.C. research trip, I realize that I have gained additional skills in research analysis and organization that will serve me for the rest of my life!