

Sam Burgess Undergraduate Research Award
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Research Strategies

The goal of this research project was to develop a policy report for an intergovernmental or non-governmental organization which addressed and suggested remedies for a relevant and contentious issue from within the organization. My research began by browsing the “Yearbook of International Organizations” and developing a basic overview of the organization with the aid of Librarian Lou Malcomb. After deciding upon the International Organization for Migration, the next step was to find and elaborate upon a current issue within the organization. I began this aspect of the research by using the resources on the Course Guide page for my course (iub.libguides.com/Cullather310), which included links to databases such as Access UN, LexisNexis Academic, and the Public Affairs Information Service. The primary goal throughout this stage of research was to develop an overview of the organization itself, including reasons for its inception, historical background and events, and the international roles it currently plays. Such backgrounds were usually found through IOM sources or overviews given in databases for intergovernmental organizations. During this period, I also began to develop an understanding of the underlying issues and disagreements occurring within and outside of the IOM. These opinions were particularly seen in statements issued by other Non-Governmental Organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, or the United Nations, and were either explicitly stated in UN documents, or remarked upon by other scholars in their articles.

Once I generated a more focused topic for the IOM, the majority of my research was conducted through the OneSearch portal, which allowed me to view scholarly and news articles distributed throughout the Indiana University library system, including many databases to which it subscribes. The most informative and opinionated sources were uncovered through the JSTOR database, namely journal articles either criticizing or praising the IOM. These provided a basis for understanding the various positions revolving around the controversial topic which was, in this instance, Assisted Voluntary Return programs. Specifying such a narrow issue posed a challenge, as many articles—academic and news—did not address the programs in specific, but rather related or more general topics. In this way, the online search browser was particularly useful in allowing a search of the words within the articles and finding alternative names for

addressing the program, or criticisms which were related to issue, without naming the official program title. This provided as well, a more diverse range of ideas and types of sources for the final paper.

The next step involved taking the issue and creating various scenarios for its resolution to present in a hypothetical memo within the IOM, which required an understanding of how the organization itself functioned. This understanding was primarily facilitated by exploring the citations listed in the scholarly articles to defend the authors' arguments. Many of these sources resulted in primary sources from the IOM, such as the organization's Constitution, but also from the overviews and objectives stated on its webpage. This section functioned in conjunction with that concerning the historical background of the organization, which also described its structure and mission statement. This project overall, provided an interesting challenge, as one had to have a thorough understanding of the organization's structure in order to address the reader as though he or she is an insider to the organization, while still explaining historical backgrounds and citing evidence for the different arguments. And such a challenge could not have been met without the extensive databases and tools provided through the IU library system.