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Library Tools and Resources

This project, *Theroux's Mothballs: The Importance of Translators' Archives*, has been invaluable in forcing me to reconsider not only what archives are, but also what research is. In my experience, most undergraduate essays involve writing about a specifically assigned text with a specifically assigned topic. When Professor Christoph Irmscher first assigned this project, however, in which the only parameter was that we had to use a manuscript collection at the Lilly Library, I had to learn how to choose my own texts and my own topic. This project did require a few skills I had already obtained: I checked out the novels *Mothballs* and *Naphtalene* [sic] from Wells Library; I used JSTOR for my secondary sources, access to which is provided by the Indiana University Libraries. Moreover, I had been to the Lilly Library before for some of my English classes. Overall, however, much of what I learned was new to me, including how archives differ from "traditional" libraries, how to find primary sources, and how to draw my own conclusions from primary sources.

This project was useful in correcting some of my misassumptions about archives. I had assumed that archives had to be older (but papers have to be preserved in order to *become* old); had to take the form of letters or diaries; and had to be by literary figures (coming to the Lilly for English classes and looking at materials by Plath, Whitman, and Vonnegut had skewed my perception of the

materials available). This project made me realize the sheer, awesome diversity of the Lilly. Previous classes had also given me the impression that the materials at the Lilly were like items in a museum: visitors look at physical objects to gain a more concrete understanding of the time period they are studying. The purpose is to reinforce, supplement, or illustrate knowledge obtained from another source—and indeed, this *is* an important function of the Lilly. However, doing research is very different from looking at artifacts for class: instead of looking at the materials as a passive observer, accepting someone else's interpretations of their importance, I had to find materials for myself and draw my own conclusions about them.

During Professor Irmischer's class, I learned very basic skills that seemed unbelievably scary to an uninitiated undergraduate like me: for example, how to register for the Lilly's reading room and how to find and request materials, especially manuscript collections, which fall outside the comforting and familiar purview of IUCAT. I knew I wanted to do a project on Arabic-English translation, since I am a double major in English and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and browsing the manuscript collections brought me to the Hutchins Mss. (which I didn't find terribly interesting) and the Taymur Mss. (which I couldn't use, since I don't speak French). With the help of Professor Irmischer and former Lilly Director Breon Mitchell, I was guided to the Theroux Mss., which has not yet been added to the online catalogue. Thus, I learned that one of the greatest resources libraries have to offer is knowledgeable librarians.

Manuscript collections vary greatly from my mental picture of "libraries": I still find it incredible that people are generous enough to donate their private

papers so that random people can look through them. Especially because Peter Theroux is still living, I wanted to be especially careful to protect his privacy. Professor Irmischer encouraged me to write about Theroux's sometimes competitive and jealous relationship with his brothers, one of whom is a novelist and one of whom is a well-known travel writer. However, while the correspondence between the brothers is one of the most interesting parts of the collection, involving myself in the man's family drama when all participants are still alive didn't sit right with me. For me, this is one of the biggest differences between books, which are published with the intent that the world will see them, and manuscript collections, where one needs to be particularly mindful and respectful of the people involved. For this reason, my paper focuses only on the literary aspects of Theroux's translation, not his personal life.

In conclusion, this project gave me a much more inclusive and varied picture of what archives are and gave me greater skills in primary source research. I am incredibly grateful to Professor Irmischer for all of his help with this project, and I have a new appreciation for the Lilly Library, which is one of the most incredible resources Indiana University has to offer.