Reflective Essay

I am a Freshman Research Scholar so I identified my research topic by meeting with my mentor and talking to him about the studies currently being worked on by his graduate students and which ones I would be most interested in researching. Some factors that influenced my topic selection was the population being researched, the reasoning behind the study, and my personal understanding of the topic. I began to explore my topic through an article my mentor gave me, from that article I created a list of keywords and looked through the references used in that particular article. I interacted with librarians through a few seminars helping me to better understand how to use our library’s databases. I also interacted with my mentor and graduate student to see what databases or journals they were currently looking at.

My research plan was to evaluate the correlation between the reactive leg drop and the sway index calculated by the balance assessment we used. One success I encountered was finding all the information I needed to help back up the purpose for this study and how to conduct my assessments. A difficulty I encountered was one of the systems the graduate student and I used to collect our data had some problems and we weren’t able to transfer some of the data we collected, so we had to modify our project for the time being until we find a way to transfer and convert those files. These influenced my research strategy by restricting my data to all female instead of female and male, so once we can convert our data to text files, we can evaluate the results and see how successful our study was for males as well. My research was improved during this project by helping me understand more of what research entails and how to better use databases and my resources in general. One lesson I have learned is that research is a lot of tedious or arduous processes in order to get the final results like finding all
the articles and information you need to do your research, recording/collecting data, converting files, and evaluating all of your data. All these little things are so tremendously important and the end result is extremely rewarding, proving all of it worth the time and effort.

The resources I utilized during my research were the library’s online database, the ILLiad to request articles that our library didn’t have access to, and librarians to understand how to best use the database. Some significant resources appropriate for my topic were PubMed, MEDLINE, SPORTDiscus, Global Health (CABI), and Google Scholar. One resource that was most useful to me was the ILLiad because many of the resources my mentor asked me to take look at or information I needed to find was not accessible through our library or I would have had to pay for it. The ILLiad allowed me to find the information I needed for free so I would not have to restrict my research because of the inability to pay for access to articles that provided me with very important and relevant information. It was also helpful because sometimes just an abstract won’t tell you if an article is really going to be extremely useful to you, so I didn’t have to pay for access and then realize I wasted my money on something that didn’t further my knowledge or help progress my research. My thesis or approach to the topic did not change due to the type or availability of resources because I was able to find ways to get access to the resources with the help of our librarians and resources provided by the library.

I searched for the information by going to the library’s website and searching for the databases relevant to my topic. Then I searched for articles in those databases using key words I came up with. I originally had difficulty finding certain types of information or using specific search tools because I was not familiar with using databases and I didn’t know how to request articles. I overcame the problems with locating the information I needed by reaching out to my
mentor, graduate student, or librarians to help me with how to find my information I needed. I have learned so much about finding and using information through a variety of digital and print resources made available through OSU libraries, the open web, or any other location. I realized that the librarians are such a great resource and if I ever can’t find an article, there is probably someone else that has it and that I can request that the library finds it for me. I also realized that I need to make a list of relevant key words or use key words from other articles to better narrow down my search results so I spend less time sifting through useless articles.

I decided what information to use in my research by reading through the abstracts first to see if they are relevant and then thoroughly reading the article to see if they used any similar methods or had any statistics that would be beneficial to creating a background and purpose for my study. Some resources were better than others because they had a good study to back up their information and they didn’t just focus on analyzing other prior studies.

Overall the research process was foreign to me before becoming a Freshman Research Scholar. This year and study has taught me so much more about research that can help me in my classes and my future career. This program also helped me to realize the doors that are open to me with research and the number of things that are out there for me to research and learn about. Without the faculty I worked with this year, I would not have been successful or found a passion for research so early in my college career.