

Due to the structure of my senior capstone project, the most relevant aspect regarding research strategies using the library's tools and resources is my literature review. Therefore, this essay will predominantly pull from my experience compiling my literature review.

During my information search, I tried to keep a consistent and methodological process. At the beginning I focused on digitally accessible sources, exploring broad topics that framed the subsequent stages of my project. For example, I delved into the contextual and historical background of the Washington State Ferries alongside exploring the concepts of experience of place and psychogeography. As I became more familiar with what I was looking for, my list of search terms expanded to become more specific and refined. I also started to consistently visit the library and look for physical books specifically so I could easily review their appendices and indexes to find relevant information.

As I began to design the methodology of my project, I originally believed I would do interviews. However, I became interested in how experience of place studies conducted their research which is where I discovered the photovoice methodology. Photovoice is where a research prompts participants to take photos of a certain experience as a way of capturing data from the participants perspective. This was a breakthrough moment during my research process and it informed the entire future direction of my project. I dedicated a section of my literature review to understanding the merits, drawbacks, best practices, and past examples of photovoice studies.

Reflecting on the project's completion, I have come to realize how valuable this work was. Writing about the advantages and disadvantages of photovoice prepared me for when I encountered those obstacles in real life while conducting my own research. As I look back on my this section of my literature review, I can reflect on how the critical lens I took was evident in my own work and taught me to be aware of the method's disadvantages while also embracing its strengths.

My overall search strategy was to find a mix between theoretical texts, academic research papers, as well as government documents from the Washington Department of Transportation and Washington State Transportation Commission. I wanted to have a good grasp on the theoretical approach of my research, have a deep understanding of how current academics are conducting the methods I was pursuing, and fully acknowledge the context of the setting I was conducting research within.

The most significant obstacles emerged in my research when my focus became overly rigid, constraining my exploration of other potential avenues to find what I was looking for. For example, I spent a prolonged time trying to find research on the user experience of ferries – which was the exact topic my project was pursuing. However, I only found one source that turned out to be not as helpful as I hoped. But when I re-framed my research into user experience of transportation, I found a helpful source that defined a framework for how different aspects of public transportation contribute to a rider's experience. I then applied this framework to the ferries as a mode of public transportation. This new perspective helped me understand to think about the information I am looking for from multiple angles, it might not be exactly where I am expecting.

I used the UW Libraries search engine to conduct specific search techniques like using boolean operators, targeted keywords, and author-specific searches, while leveraging limit

options and defining my source type. Some frequently used keywords I used included “Washington State Ferry”, “Experience of Place”, “Psychogeography”, “User Experience”, “User Research”, “Transportation”, “Photovoice”, “Public Life”, and “Urban Planning”.

In addition to direct searches, I used the references section from articles to thoroughly investigate and discover other papers that were highly referenced. For example, when searching about photovoice methodology, multiple literature reviews referenced the first photovoice study conducted by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris in China. This paper was not easily accessible when doing a quick search. The only reason I found this valuable and harder-to-find paper was because I had paid close attention to the articles that I could easily find and notice this pattern. This process of meticulous attention to detail facilitated the discovery of valuable yet less accessible sources.

When evaluating sources for relevance to my research project, I prioritized coherence and interconnectivity among sources. The most important thing to me was being able to envision how each source was talking to each other. Initially, I gathered information without excessive scrutiny, focusing on relevance. Afterwards, I carefully reviewed my annotations of each source and pulled the most important, stand-out quotes from each. Then I mapped out how the quotes commented on each other, causing overall connections from each source to form. If a source did not seem to be in discussion with other sources I believed were critical and in conversation, I did not keep it in my literature review.

I discovered so much about research tools and techniques through my senior capstone project – taking advantage of the interlibrary loan as well. Some general important learnings were how vital having a list of keywords was and ensuring to save everything I come across. I used Zotero to save any relevant source I found because I never knew if I might want to go back to it in the future. One of my biggest lessons was learning to understand the topics adjacent to my own research topic. This was extremely helpful because it ensured I could always try to search for information from different perspectives and potentially still find something relevant.