

## 2021 Library Research Award Reflective Essay

By Emma Finkel

Autumn quarter 2020, my freshman year at the University of Washington, I asynchronously attended English 299. The class assignment was to write a research essay and construct a showcase piece pertaining to marine biology. I focused on seaweed's ability to mitigate climate change and then submitted a children's book called *Maureen's Melting Snow Cone* as my showcase assignment. The essay was developed by examining scientific data on climate change and seaweed. I then applied this knowledge to produce an accessible display of the information in the form of a children's book. My initial research question: In what ways is seaweed currently and planned to be used to combat climate change?

To answer this question, my instructor Sarah Ghasedi proposed I speak with the Librarian Consultant Kathleen Collins. In my virtual consultation with Mrs. Collins, she taught me to utilize the library guides for each subject of study. This meeting introduced me to the Aquatic and Fishery Science Library Guide, Web of Science database as well as the use of keywords such as seaweed, methane, and biofuel during the academic journal pursuit. I hit a roadblock during the seaweed and sequestration keyword search. Once I changed the search to carbon sink, I found a scientific study published in ICES Journal of Marine Science explaining the sinking of marine vegetation (also known as a carbon sink). For each academic journal I read, I composed detailed documentation of notes pertaining to the subject matter including the name and background of each researcher and the journal's important facts. I also formulated another document with links to every journal, website, or article I encountered in order to retrieve them

during my writing process. My intent was to organize the data and articles of reference before beginning my writing.

After researching sea kelps abilities to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, I began to wonder if it is capable of removing any other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. When I researched the Web of Science using the keywords methane and seaweed, I found a scientific peer-reviewed paper about a study on seaweeds' effect on lactating cows proving that seaweed has a success rate in reducing methane emissions from livestock. It helped me gain a better grasp of climate change and kelps capabilities, bringing me back to the big question: In what ways is seaweed currently and planned to be used to combat climate change? While reading through the *Green New Deal*, *Paris Agreement*, and the United Nations Climate Change websites, I, unfortunately, did not find strategies involving seaweed being mentioned. This meant the ocean was rarely considered in the global agenda for reducing climate change.

I wrote and reread the essay multiple times confirming my citations were accurate, my points were clear, and the grammar was correct. I made an appointment with Ashika, an Odegaard Writing and Research Consultant (OWRC), and we read through my work together to evaluate if the essay was clear, orderly, and intelligible. I also shared my essay for a peer review with two other students in the class. Making sure to continue editing my essay based on my writing consultant and peer review comments.

After finishing the essay, I went through a period of uncertainty in choosing a method that best suited my vision for the showcase concept. My thoughts jumped from a poetry book, video, or podcast, but ultimately, I landed on a desire to compose a children's book aimed at kids 5-8 years old because children are our future policymakers.

I encountered four problems in my attempt to create this children's book. My first issue was not reading a children's book since I was a child myself, so I had no idea the steps necessary to write one. I turned to Instructor Ghasedi who offered great advice with my concern. She urged me to analyze children's books in order to grasp the writing style, and to explore articles by writers and editors on story structure. I stumbled upon an article written by an editor that offered meaningful advice, such as the recommended page length, the word count for my target audience, that the catalyst of the story must start quickly, and the importance of repetition.

My second problem was condensing scientific information into a comprehensible format for children. I avoided complicated words and explained complex ideas in simple terminology with complementary images. Since kids find farting funny, snow cones delicious, and moving houses to be scary, I incorporated these relatable ideas into the impartation of scientific knowledge.

My third dilemma was illustrating a book despite my inability to draw. I quickly noticed there was a solution to my problem, Photoshop's ability to limit the amount of artwork I needed to construct by duplicating images I created. While partially solving one predicament, this led to a fourth complication, I had never opened Photoshop or drawn on a digital software. I transferred the expertise I originally possessed on formatting in Indesign to Photoshop. Through time, effort, and determination, I educated myself on Photoshop, illustration, and details on creating a book. Once completing the artwork, I shared my work with the same two classmates as before and implemented their recommendations. After enacting the peer suggestions, I turned in the project.

This project immensely stimulated my growth as a scholar and artist. It introduced me to indispensable resources the library offers, such as the Librarian Consultants, OWRC Writing Tutors, and UW's grant of access to academic journals. I am extremely grateful to my teacher,

the librarian, and my peers for their collaborative effort in this project. With their guidance, I additionally mastered methods for investigating academic journals through various databases and keywords. This project inspired me to draw, write a book, learn Photoshop, and instilled confidence to not shy away from a challenging project. All of these are tools I will be able to implement for future assignments and have advanced my ability to reach out to others when I need assistance.