

For this project, I was lucky enough to be introduced to the wealth of resources provided by the UW library by Professor Yee and History Librarian Theresa Mudrock. Their guidance made it much easier to navigate my research and find the kind of sources I needed. I started by looking for secondary sources using the UW Library search, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Ebsco. It was helpful to read abstracts and summaries first to decide if sources would be most productive in my research. The UW Library search makes it easy to vet sources by providing summaries, a list of topics, and contents. If a source looked promising to me, I read through the source and took notes along the way. As I found sources that were interesting and/or productive for my topic, I used those articles to gather new search terms and resources. I also used Google search frequently to conduct further research on topics or people that came up in my research which I thought might be fruitful. As I researched and learned more about my topic, I was able to understand more clearly what exactly I was looking for, and could more quickly decide which types of sources were useful and which were not. This process taught me how fun and painful research can be. There is so much information to be found on any given topic, and most of it is very intriguing, but it is impossible to read and/or use it all. Moving forward, I understand that I can save time in my research process by saving those interesting but not particularly relevant sources for later and focusing on the ones I know I will be able to use.

My overall research approach was to decide on a few keywords and use those across every database. I also felt it was important to search for a variety of resources, which is why I looked for journal articles, dissertations, print books, historical documents, magazine and newspaper articles, and documentary films. I encountered many roadblocks and dead-ends, especially when looking for primary documents. I spent a lot of time reading and taking notes on things that I found fascinating but were not necessarily relevant. When I was having trouble

finding sources or needing to fill gaps on particular subjects, I would revise my search terms to look for more specific types of sources or go back to sources I had found pertinent and look at what sources those authors had referenced. The advanced search tool was extremely useful as it allowed me to apply many terms that may be used in sources that pertained to my topic. Search terms I used a lot were “body” or “bodybuilding” and “man” or “woman” or “ideal.” Depending on how many sources I found from a given group of terms, I narrowed down or expanded my search terms. My research for this paper was very thorough. I uncovered more sources than I knew what to do with and discovered ideas and topics I had never even considered, but the length of the paper and the scope of the topic required that I limit the number of sources I used. I don’t think that I will ever feel I have exhausted all of my resources in a single research project, but I am comfortable with where I arrived.

What I learned throughout this research process is that research can feel very daunting, exhausting, and frustrating at times. In fact, I think a majority of what I felt during the process was frustration. I often walked away from a research session feeling I understood less about my topic than when I had started. When I felt overwhelmed (or underwhelmed) by what I was finding, I often thought about what this process might be like without all of the Library tools I was using. To have free and easy access to these troves of information is invaluable. I felt incredibly supported in my research process, and I cannot imagine the challenges I would face without those resources. I most frequently used the UW Library online search tool, which often led me to databases like JSTOR, EBSCO, and ProQuest, as well as several print books that I checked out from various libraries across campus. I made frequent use of the “request UW item” tool, which made it easy for me to get books from the library nearest to me, without having to venture to other library locations. I also used online databases directly with my UW credentials.

Another really helpful tool was the presentation by Theresa Mudrock, which provided me with a foundational understanding of how I could most effectively conduct research. The UW librarians are one of the greatest resources we can access. The biggest thing I learned is that there is a lot of information out there. This is overwhelming but also exciting. I was able to effectively narrow down sources by asking myself a few questions; like, “What kind of source is this?” “When was this source written?” “What is the author’s goal?” “Does the author’s goal support my goal?” “How much pertinent information am I getting from this source?” “What sources did the author use?” These questions, among others, helped me decide which sources were going to be the best suited for my paper and eliminated any sources that may not align with the goal of my paper. Though my research process was long and arduous at times, it was also exciting, revelatory, and edifying. Despite the challenges I faced, I look forward to doing it many times over and taking full advantage of the rich mass of resources that are available to me in the UW Libraries.