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Reflective Piece

Preparing for this essay was a very rewarding experience because I grew as a student, researcher and academic. I have always been fascinated by medieval history, but have not had the opportunity to pursue this interest in an academic context until now. The topic of my essay required me to do research in both the social and scientific fields. As I began my preliminary research, I realized just how rich, vast and comprehensive the Osler Library's resources are, making it possible for students to do research in a wide variety of disciplines. For example, online databases brought specialized and highly esteemed journals to my fingertips. Through the use of these databases, I was able to learn about the medieval experience of miracles, read about the lives of twelfth-century pilgrims to Canterbury's shrine, and learn about the role of medical doctors at that time in history. My online research also included the experiences and results of Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness meditation programs. Although the scope of my research was broad, it was made feasible by the use of the Osler Library's online databases.

My research skills were sharpened and broadened throughout my work on this essay. I learned how to navigate and skilfully use online resources like JSTOR and Science Direct to find relevant, reliable, and insightful research. With the help and guidance of McGill's librarians, I developed the ability to refine my online searches by using synonymous search terms to increase the sensitivity of my research. This skill made my time spent doing research more efficient and helped me come across sources that I otherwise would not have found. I also learned how to use both primary and secondary sources to enhance the quality of my research and add depth in support of my thesis. For example, I was able to access and make use of concrete examples from the lives of medieval pilgrims through the work of nineteenth-century historians.

While some of the sources I needed were not available through McGill's libraries, I learned how to use the Interlibrary Loan resource and was thus able to complete my research. My essay became more significant through the use of library material and resources because I was able to include both primary and secondary sources from vastly different time periods and social contexts, not only through McGill but also its affiliated libraries made available to me.

As I reflect on my use of the library's resources throughout the process of writing my essay, I appreciate the important academic role of the Osler Library, as well as the network of libraries that McGill offers its students. The quality and scope of the research that gives substance to my essay would certainly not have been attainable without the effective and skilful use of the Osler Library's many resources.