Deciding that I didn’t quite have enough time to go swimming before class, I decided to go to the library to continue researching for the project that I was already about waist-deep in, committed to the slow toil forward through the murky waters of literary research. *An ecofeminist lens examining Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem Christabel eh?* I had come to the solid conclusion that this would undoubtedly require some knowledge on ecofeminism. I had read a several articles regarding the poem accessed through some of the library databases such as JSTOR, but realized that this essay would require a formidable ground-up understanding of this rather fringe philosophy.

Thus, running up the stairs (I like a good work-out) with an ISBN number scribbled on a folded piece of paper, I was excited and optimistic to find the ecofeminist voices that would guide my essay. With delight I spotted not only the book my professor had recommended but many, many more texts pertaining to ecofeminism. I sat down on the carpet before the blessedly laden bookshelf and examined my trove. Later, I walked away with an armload of books that all seemed quite promising, most characterized by specific angles of the philosophy that I wanted to examine in my essay, and a couple I was simply seduced by (ecofeminism in context with the Cold War?!—likened to the “morning after”?! Way too interesting not to pick up at least for a quick skim). It was at this moment, walking down the stairs, the weight of my books giving me a sense of reassurance, that I felt confident in regards to my ability to have this research project be something that I could be proud of completing.

As a student of English embarking on her research career, the library is perhaps the most valuable resource available to me, beyond (of course) my fantastic professors and what I would like to label as my own brilliance. I had earlier dug through the databases in order to find articles relevant to my research question, but these could only get me part of the way to my goal of examination with an ecofeminist lens. These articles from various literary journals gave me very insightful interpretations and readings of Christabel, but I needed a better understanding of ecofeminism in general. There were critical gaps in my essay—reflective of my understanding of ecofeminism—that needed completing; knowledge that that I could not find through JSTOR. What is more, I had caught myself a couple of times almost becoming derailed by particular bends in articles, in danger of changing the shape of my essay in order to fit these articles that did not address my topics specifically. It was critical that I make my understanding complete—exhaustive searches ecofeminism and Samuel Taylor Coleridge and ecofeminism and Christabel resulted in only a few articles. It became evident that I needed books that addressed the topic more broadly, so that I could pull from these books as I saw fit, rather than being led by the sources.
I poured over my capsules of wisdom with relish. But I was methodical—it is not the case that I am burdened with too much free time. First I skimmed through each of the books, marking which chapters I deemed useful for my purposes. Then, I read. I stayed up late and also read during meals (I apologize for the occasional salad dressing smear). There is something completely underated in the tangible value given to reading books. Not only did these books enhance my understanding, but the physicality of my books, such as the “Ecological Feminism” brought about an immersion into a research experience. Sticky notes everywhere (always some found in my bed) I stayed up late and wrote down insights regarding my objects of analysis in relation to the information in the text. I recorded useful page numbers that contained the most supportive quotes for my interpretation, and dutifully toted the most useful books— distinguishable from their rash of post-its sprouting in neon.

My holistic understanding of ecofeminism, granted through this extensive reading, allowed me to be the one writing the paper. I was able to manipulate the information that I had garnered through my articles found via JSTOR in a manner that flowed from my own analysis. I used the quotes that I dug from all of my sources as support, as singers who gave credence to the song I had created.

I feel that my paper was a success—and more importantly, my experience with doing research feels successful. Although didn’t win best of humanities in RSCA, have received lots of accolade from various professors. In addition to the RSCA, I presented at the CSU Honors conference, where I found that many of the Honors Program directors were highly impressed with my paper. However, the success of the paper itself is minor in comparison to what it implies in regards to my success as a burgeoning researcher. I learned the value of generating a base comprehension of a topic, as well as refining my research skills in general. I learned the criticality of taking a systematic and organized approach in context of temporal limits. This experience also reified my belief in the power of uninhibitedly jumping to tackle a looming and huge research task.

But all of this would be void if not for my access to the libraries’ resources. Had I not been able to take that armload of books, I would have not been able to reach the success I had grasped in terms of both research and finished product.