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Library Research Reflection

The ability to research topics has become one of the most important tools I have learned through my education. For school I have performed this task on many occasions, most recently to understand the city, Pomona, around me. In particular, my research focused on the establishment of the historic districts in the city and how they may be affecting the city as a whole. For the project I started with the Library’s One Search, looking for information into the reasons for establishing historic districts, how to quantify their effectiveness, and to try and establish a connection between the effectiveness of a historic district as a way of bettering the surrounding city. I began by using key words for these initial searches such as historic district, economics, city planning, to try and find anything and everything that might associate historic districts to their surroundings. From this I was able to identify a number of articles that helped to define what a historic district has meant historically and well as how the historic district has evolved to its modern connotation of a redevelopment tool. These sources included journal entries from a variety of disciplines including sociology and city planning. From here I began to form my argument, recognizing the important role of local attractions in the economies of a historic district as the catalyst for the district to maintain its appeal. During my Historical Geography class, we took a day and visited the Cal Poly Pomona Special Collections department where the class was introduced to the quality primary information that was available. This trip to the archive along with the background research I had performed through the databases led me to identify the Pomona Fox Theater as the important structure on the landscape of Pomona, in particular its effects on the landscape of the historic 2nd Street walking mall and the Edison Historic Districts. In the archive, I was able to find a collection on the reopening of the Fox Theater. The archive included a number of excellent sources including period publication of the Daily Progress Bulletin from when the theater first opened in the 1930’s as well as publications from the grand re-opening in 2009. The power of The Fox Theater as a force of economic opportunity is exemplified in all of my research, but the most influential data about the theater is the time periods chosen to invest money into its creation and revitalization. The Fox Theater initially opened in 1931, only two years into the Great Depression and the revitalization effort was performed in 2009, in the middle of the Great Recession... Both executed as ways to attract people into the city.

The Resources available in the library have made research much easier, but it has also made the importance of good, thorough research that much more important. The accessibility of information through the vast internet databases as well as the hard copy prints available through interlibrary loan have made data and information exceptionally easy to access, making it a challenge to find the right data, as well as the most complete information on the subject in order to make one’s argument substantial and complete. The challenge to finding the most complete amount of information is understanding how the information is databased and what keywords will bring up the most accurate information. To overcome this challenge I would initially start with what I thought would be helpful and would keep a list of the phrases that I searched. When I would find an article that I found to be useful, I would take note of the keyword filters that were associated with it and refine my search based on those filters that best relate to my project topic. After collecting a wide variety of sources from many different
disciplines, I had to refine my sources into a cohesive argument. This refinement cut my initial list of sources down by sixty percent, leaving me with only the sources that I required to present and support my argument. Once I had completed my research and refinement, I prepared a presentation for the 4th annual student RSCA conference held on campus. The process of researching and preparing this presentation has taught me a valuable lesson in the importance of preservation and use of primary research materials available in library special collections archives.