

2018

Runner-up entry for 2018

Julia Panter
Connecticut College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/libprize>

Recommended Citation

Panter, Julia, "Runner-up entry for 2018" (2018). *Library Research Prize*. 4.
<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/libprize/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Information Services at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Research Prize by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Julia Panter
Research Statement
Spring 2018

Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?

I developed my thesis topic for nearly two years prior to completing my independent study. I have always been interested in criminology and prison systems, to the point where I nearly self-designed a major in the topic during my sophomore year. However, when I chose to major in Slavic Studies, that interest evolved into a fascination with the Soviet Gulag system. Since I am also in the Museum Studies and CISLA certificate programs, I also knew that I wanted my SIP to somehow relate to curation and museums. When I was accepted into CISLA in early 2016, I began to think of ways to combine all of these interests into a singular thesis topic. This was done with the help of my mother, a research librarian at Princeton University, who encouraged me to think of ways that the victims of the Gulag have been memorialized in Russia. When I returned to school for the Spring 2016 semester, I met first with my academic advisor, Professor Andrea Lanoux, to discuss possibilities for my SIP. She offered advice on different directions in which I could take my SIP, but suggested that I ask Professor Ivanov to be my SIP advisor, as he is more knowledgeable about the Gulag. I then met with Professor Ivanov, who told me that I should consider a case study of a single Gulag camp, which would ideally have some relationship to museums, museology, or curation. This led me to conduct pre-research on various Soviet Gulag camps. During the pre-research phase, I searched specifically for information about labor camps that had inspired large memorialization efforts, and eventually decided to use the Solovki Gulag camp (located on an island in the Solovetsky archipelago in northern Russia) as the subject of my case study. Once I had made that decision, I began looking for books that provided background information on the history of the Solovki camp.

Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: "Ebsco," being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the "library database" is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)

Most of the background information that I used came from articles that I found in JSTOR. My search strategy for JSTOR was to begin with extremely narrow search criteria, and then slowly broaden my search terms if I did not immediately find anything of use. I also used the online collection at the Princeton University Library to find the book upon which most of my historical background was based. I frequently utilized the CTW library system to borrow books from Wesleyan and Trinity Colleges, which proved to be especially useful when I needed to cite information from my sources' footnotes or endnotes. I used Interlibrary Loan to acquire a difficult-to-find DVD with English subtitles that ended up

being an invaluable resource. While conducting my research, I searched primarily in English, but also used my Russian language skills to find more useful primary sources in JSTOR and Academic OneFile. Much of my imperial research came from Russian-language websites that I found simply by searching on Google, including a website that contained an immense number of articles written by various scholars around the world and the websites of two government-funded organizations that operate on Solovki today. I even found some important information through social media platforms; for example, I subscribe to several Russian newspaper accounts on Instagram. On October 31st, one page shared an article and image about the Wall of Grief, which had been erected in Moscow that day and was the first government-funded attempt to commemorate the victims of the Gulag in Russia, and which ended up factoring into my thesis in a major way. To find out about something so relevant to my thesis immediately after its occurrence was crucial. Finally, I would sometimes find information on sites that Professor Ivanov referred me to, which I would then search and often translate to find usable information for my project.

Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?

I was surprised to see just how much information already existed about my thesis topic, and therefore I did not use every source that I found. When reading my sources, I asked myself how directly each one pertained to the Solovki Gulag camp, as well as if the source was providing background or empirical information. Each week, Professor Ivanov would give me a specific subject to research. These topics ranged from theoretical articles in memory studies to human rights organizations in Russia, and so I knew exactly what kind of information I was looking for during each phase of the research process. When I was given my weekly assignment, I would first do some preliminary research, and then outline how I wanted that section of my paper to look. Then, I would read my sources more thoroughly and decide whether or not to include them based on the information that they contained. I made sure sources were credible before including them, and so I used sources mainly from academic databases, published books, or official organization websites. I frequently asked myself where the documents I was reading had originated and how that could potentially affect the information that it contained, as works published in Russia do not enjoy the same liberties of the press as Western documents. This was only ever a serious concern when I was reading newspaper articles--I frequently read articles from TASS, the state news agency, but rarely utilized the information in my paper. I also included sources that were particularly noteworthy or contained esoteric information--for instance, I completed an extensive analysis of a page on the University of Glasgow website, which focused exclusively on prisoners' art in the Solovki prison camp. I included analyses of these sites because I felt that they spoke to the international scholarly community's efforts to commemorate the victims of the Soviet Gulag, which in many ways exceed those of the Russian and Soviet governments. It was these types of sources that comprised the backbone of my Senior Integrative Project.