

Osler Reflection Essay

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In researching for my Osler essay, I felt I was transported back in time to 1914. My essay focused on McGill medical students during WWI and the resources I used made me feel like I was in that era. In order to write my essay, I used resources from the Osler Library, the Rare Book and Special Collections Library and the online archives of the McGill Daily.

Researching in these libraries made me feel as I was experiencing history firsthand. I requested several documents that pertained to McGill's 3rd General Hospital from letters to the Dean, diaries of students, official war diaries, etc... Reading through these documents helped me establish an intimate overview of the Hospital and gain an appreciation of the era. Just opening up old documents and letters that had been in existence for over 100 years was quite fascinating. What I found the most interesting in my research was going through the archives of the McGill Daily. Scrolling through the headlines and reading articles, I get a sense of the student life and the environment at McGill during the early 20th century. This exercise also allowed to reflect on my own experiences as a medical student in 2016 compared to those of a student in 1916. Some things felt very similar to today such as articles talking about the stress of exams. However, you can also appreciate how different medicine and society were in the early parts of the 20th century and realize how far we have come since then in aspects of diversity and equality.

Since I come from a science background I have done extensive literature searches in biomedical fields but doing research for this essay was quite different from what I was

accustomed to. Not everything I needed was online and easily searchable in a database. To find documents of interest, I had to manually search through catalogues and online indexes. Once I found what seemed to be relevant documents, I still had to read through a lot of material to find what I needed. I think this process helped me acquire new research skills. I had to develop a different approach than what I was normally accustomed to. I had to manually determine what was significant instead of the search engines we have become so habituated to use. Once I found what I needed, I had to sort through the pertinent parts and needed to judiciously assess the documents. I believe investigating and writing this essay has further developed my research and critical thinking skills.