

Transcript for The University Libraries Undergraduate Research Award – Get inspired!
<http://iminervapodcast.blogspot.com/2011/01/university-libraries-undergraduate.html>
January 25, 2011

KL: The University Libraries Undergraduate Research Award is given in recognition of an outstanding UNCG undergraduate research project by an individual or a group that best demonstrates the ability to locate, select, and synthesis information from library resources and uses those resources in the creation an original research project in any media. The winning entry receives a cash prize \$500 funded by the University Libraries. For the coming year that will be award on April 8 2011 at the undergraduate honors convocation. Students interested in submitting their work will need to be enrolled as full-time undergraduates during Spring 2011 at UNCG in any discipline and must have completed a research project for a credit course or a supervised independent study at UNCG during the Fall, Spring or Summer semesters in 2011.

What does it take to win the University Libraries Undergraduate Research Award? To answer that we turn now to Mary Robinson the first recipient of the award; Mary is a Media and Theater Studies major who will graduate this December. Also with us is Professor Chris Woodworth who nominated Mary's paper. And I am going to start with a question for Professor Woodworth.

Tell us a little about the class or classes Mary has taken with you and how you decided to nominate her for this award.

PW: This particular paper came out of Theater 501, which is Theater History II. All Theater students regardless of their degree track within the department, are required to take (3) three theater history courses. So many students will take [Theater] history I,II, and III, which are surveys. Sometimes students elect to take a different course in lieu of Theater History III.

Mary has elected to take an additional course. So she has actually been in all three of my theater history classes as well as my feminist theater course. So the paper that came out of the Theater History II course, which she was in, last year, was obviously an extraordinary work by an undergraduate student. She has a wonderful ability to pull together an array of sources and carve out very dynamic and compelling exploration of whatever her research topic might be. Her papers consistently emerge as top papers in whatever class. And I think a lot of that has to do with curiosity in regards to the subject matter.

KL: Great, Mary do you want to tell us something about the paper that you wrote?

MR: Sure, for this particular paper I done Theater History I and we were supposed to select a topic from the 1700's to about the late 1900's or so...I wanted to explore Sarah Bernhardt in some way because when I was younger my mom used to call me, Sarah Bernhardt all the time. So I wanted to have some information behind the name. I wanted... As I was looking at possible topics I decided I wanted to somehow explore who she was and how she became the name we know today because we still do talk about her. And so, I wanted to talk about how she crafted herself and her legend

KL: That's great and how did the libraries come into play for this particular project?

MR: At the beginning of each of class with Dr. Woodworth, she always introduces the idea of a research paper. So we have little bench marks that we have to meet. One of them is that we have to meet with Mark Schumacher and he's supposed to give us a lecture. And so...

KL: What do you ask Mark [Schumacher, one of the Reference librarians at Jackson library and the liaison to the theater department] to talk about? What types of things do you ask him to talk about when he comes to your class to speak?

PW: Yes, Mark is wonderful. He covers a wide array of topics with his unique flair for performance. It comes through clearly in his presentations. He seems to especially enjoy speaking to theater students, who of course enjoy a bit of panache in presentations and he certainly offers that.

And so ... Mark and I met at the very end of the Spring 2009 semester because he was taking over Nancy Fogarty's responsibilities in regards to theater. So we talked about a wide variety of things that we hope to accomplish in that library session. And it is amazing what we can sort of pack in to that (50) fifty minutes. First and foremost, was of course familiarizing the students with the library catalog and how to find an actual book on the shelf, which is, for some of students the first time that they have gone up into the stacks. We talk about the happy accidents of research when you are actually up in the stacks and you broaden your search to what's next to the one particular item that you are looking for on the shelf. And we talk about research databases, electronic journals...we have a great focus on Interlibrary Loan (ILL). I find that there are a lot of topics that students tend to gravitate toward and there are only so many sources in our library. And so ILL becomes really critical so that they don't start that vicious war of recalling books from each other, but instead seek out alternative sources. So Mark picks a topic from something within a particular time period that the class covers and kind of goes through a mock search in the catalogs and the databases, etc. to demonstrate to the students how they would find materials on that particular subject.

KL: I know Mary that you had mentioned earlier that seeing some images of Bernhardt were very important to you. And one thing I didn't know was that Sarah Bernhardt didn't speak any English and she preformed for American and English stages in French. It is just really hard for me to believe that somebody could just show so much expression in a different language and exactly be well received in countries where people didn't necessarily understand her language.

Were you able to find photos of her in the libraries?

MR: Yes, I was able to use the Hanson collection and they have several, I think about 10-11 images. I used for inspiration when I was discussing Bernhardt's costuming in relation to her legend. I found it very helpful to have the images in front of me so that I could look at all the nitty-gritty details of what was going into her costumes.

KL: Any favorite performance of her that you read about or heard about?

MR: I am kind of intrigued by *Salomé* that's Oscar Wilde's play. And Cleopatra I feel like her outfits in one of the images in the Hanson Collection I find stunning.

KL: We'll have to get pictures of that...What other responses have you gotten to this paper?

MR: So far they have all been very positive. I was fortunate to present it several times. I presented it for the Lloyd Honors Symposium here and it was well received. And then I'd also gotten the Southeastern Theater Conference Young Scholar Award and I had the opportunity of presenting my research in Lexington, KY.

PW: I have to note that that is a pretty prestigious award for an undergraduate student. There is only one undergraduate young scholars' award given annually and Mary was the sole recipient in the U.S.

KL: Wow...Congratulations!

MR: Thanks, I was very fortunate. The people at SETC were very welcoming and supportive of my work. And then I was able to present my paper, "Poetry in Motion" at the Comparative Drama Conference in Los Angeles, CA. And that these were scholars and they were extremely supportive and asked intriguing questions and I felt very inspired by being there.

KL: Wow that's great. So the paper has kind of taken on a life of its own. Do you have any advice for students who might be thinking about submitting their work for the award?

MR: Proofread...Proofread first and foremost, but I've had several classes with Dr. Woodworth to sort of perfect my technique for research. I know that I like to use the search engine and find my sources before I go into the library and then I like to pull those books part. Not literally...respect the books. Pick a topic that interests you. And just be able to explain your process thoroughly and clearly.

KL: Well, Thank you so much.