Transcript forMeet Nathan Roberts - Winner of 2013 Undergraduate Research Award (April 2013)

Hi! I'm Irma Minerva at the University Libraries at UNCG, and this is your podcast of the week.

Kimberly : I'm Kimberly Lutz and I'm here today with Nathan Roberts, the winner of the 2013 University Libraries Undergraduate Research Paper Award. He wrote his paper "Chinese Consumers, World Systems, and World Cultural Analysis of Cultural Hybridity" for Professor Knehans's Politics of Globalization course. Nathan is a sociology major who will graduate this May. Welcome.

Nathan: Thank you for having me.

K: Tell us a little bit about your research paper.

N: It started, really, from my fascination with Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory and how it applied to cultural transfusion throughout the world system. The big thing in global studies is concentrating on China right now because it's the world's second largest economy, and it came up fairly quickly, and I was wondering how it was adjusting into a mass consumer style lifestyle and how it was going to affect the society in the long run.

K: Have you done other work on China before, or was this new?

N: This was the first time doing something on China. I had looked at other facets of consumer culture prior, but I decided to expand it out to China this time.

K: And as you were writing this paper, doing the research for it, what library resources did you find most helpful?

N: Really, the best thing for me, I'm a commuter student, I live in High Point, so the best thing was being able to just hop online and look through the databases and find research that was actually relevant quickly that I could just save onto my computer and use it later. I also ended up finding books through the search function on the library's website. So I was able to find the books and then whenever I was on campus, come get them at my leisure.

K: Were you able to use any e-books for this project?

N: I didn't use any e-books, mainly because I have difficulty reading and retaining information on the computer.

K: As you were finding articles, were there particular databases that were more helpful, or specific search terms?

N: I usually went to the SocIndex with full text because I'd used it before, so I knew that database fairly well. And I used JSTOR quite a bit. Really, with the search terms, I just typed in "Chinese consumers" and hoped that found something.

K: And it obviously did, because you have a lot of good sources for this paper. So, I've mentioned that you're a sociology major but this was written for a political science class. Were there any challenges there?

N: There were a few challenges because in sociology, I've always concentrated on identity and culture and people. There wasn't a major translation over to political science for me, it was a new field going into… it was the first political science class I'd taken, so it was kind of hard maneuvering through the slight differences even though there weren't major ones.

K: How are you expecting that your research skills that you used for this paper for your career here at UNCG will help you going forward as you leave us in May?

N: Well, since I'm planning on going to grad school, I'm pretty sure the research abilities that I've gained from being in the UNCG sociology and outside departments are going to be very useful to me because it taught me how to really narrow down my search terms. Starting with something that is as big a theory as world systems theory is really broad, so narrowing it down slowly really helped out and that's going to be something I'm definitely going to use in the future.

K: Do you have any tips for students who might apply for this award next year?

N: I would just say try your hardest, and dig through as much research as possible so that you can actually find relevant sources. And the library has a lot of them.

K: Well thank you!

N: Thank you for having me!