

UGA Libraries' Undergraduate Research Award
Chemical Weapons and the Legacy of War

This past year, I worked on a research project exploring chemical weapons dumping in the Pacific after World War II and the impact chemical weapons have on the communities in the Pacific Islands. As a student who conducted primarily bench research for the majority of my college career, leaving the lab bench and entering the world of databases and library shelves was an exciting and transformative experience. Although I was previously introduced to some of the library resources for work in my classes, I had not used the many resources the library has to offer to conduct independent research as broad or as varied as this project entailed. In addition, I had previously not utilized the library so often and so religiously to find sources, design my research, and guide my findings.

My interest in chemical weapons began last spring when I attended a lecture given by my future mentor, Dr. James Porter. His lecture focused on chemical weapons dumped off the Puerto Rican coast and on the lack of cooperation of multiple parties in the U.S. Government in helping him address the problem. I was intrigued by his lecture and followed up, not knowing at the time, that I had found a project that would shape my senior year and drop me into the world of library research. I decided to dedicate my last year of CURO to studying chemical weapons and their destructive legacy.

Although Dr. Porter's investigation up to that point had focused solely on the Caribbean and Puerto Rico, we decided to focus my research on the opposite side of the world, concentrating on the history of chemical weapons dumping in the Pacific, the impact the munitions have on the communities living on islands throughout the Pacific,

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and investigating actions to address these problems, primarily by the world's leading coalition against chemical weapons proliferation, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW.)

I began my exploration into the depths of chemical weapons dumping by mining a collection of information gathered from the United States Archives in College Park, Maryland. I had the opportunity to explore copies of the vast number of documents found in the archives as part of my research, analyzing government documents shelved for decades and long forgotten.

I followed up this line of inquiry by utilizing the UGA Library multi-search database. Utilizing the key words "chemical weapons dumping" and "Pacific Ocean" I found a variety of useful sources, like "Sea-dumped chemical weapons: Environmental risk, occupational hazard." I also used the search to find sources pertaining to chemical weapons dumping in the Baltic Sea, a documented dump site for munitions during World War II. The many sources found regarding the Baltic Sea, chemical weapons dumping there, scientific research into the effects of dumping, and efforts taken to address problems led me to utilize the Baltic as a case study for my research. I found a great deal of information and resources in the multi-search database. Many of the documents I found had reference lists I utilized to gather even more sources and information pertaining to my project.

In order to find sources more pertinent to my research, I met for a consultation with Chandler Christoffel, a research librarian at the Science Library. Mr. Christoffel demonstrated how to narrow down my search when using the multi-search tool through the use of direct key words and advanced search options. He directed me to a variety of

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helpful databases and search engines such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Access UN. I utilized these tools to guide my search for new articles about chemical weapons dumping, to find government documents and congressional reports, and to find literature from reputable sources.

Google Scholar was the most useful searching tool I discovered during our meeting. Through the use of Google Scholar, I found even more resources pertinent to my project, such as the CHEMSEA report. The option on Google Scholar to “Find Related Articles” was especially helpful in finding sources for my project.

During this meeting, Mr. Christoffel also introduced me to EndNote. I had never downloaded or utilized EndNote before, and it is now a fabulous tool in my research endeavors. I use EndNote to organize my sources in a more productive way and to create professional in-text citations and bibliographies. EndNote is one of the most useful tools I found through my research experience this year.

Following my consultation with Mr. Christoffel, my research mentor and I had a second consultation with Diana Hartle, another research librarian at the Science Library and the research librarian most familiar with Dr. Porter’s work. She is helping us to find more sources pertaining to my chemical weapons research, and is working to help us identify the best possible sources for my project beyond what I have already collected.

Researching this topic was rewarding and informative but also a great challenge. In order to find the information for my project, I was required to find documents from a wide variety of sources, including policy reports, scientific data reports, government documents, and law manuscripts. Each different document type required different types

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of analysis and approach. Furthermore, while many of the documents of the past have since been declassified and made available to the public, finding information regarding chemical weapons dumping in World War II is still a challenge due to their antiquity and previously classified nature. 2/3 of our original source material was classified prior to this project, and information regarding this research remains conflicting and contorted for any researcher trying to find the truth.

My goals as a researcher are to find the truth and demonstrate the facts in a way that creates change. The UGA library and its many resources are a valuable asset in this endeavor, and I have learned so much about research tools and methods in my brief exploration into the true legacy of war.

In Progress Bibliography

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