

David Harris Flaherty Undergraduate Student Library Scholarship 2020
Recipient: Jessica Zaza, Faculty of Humanities, Department of French
Award-winning Essay

In my first year of studies at the University of Victoria, the library's resources quickly became a cornerstone to the quality and integrity of my writing. These resources were especially helpful to the success of my first paper, which analysed the trial and execution of Marie Joseph Angélique in 1734. After reading "The Hanging of Angélique," by Afua Cooper, I became enthralled by the black slave's story described throughout the historical novel, as her sentence seemed to stem from racist and classist opinions so typical of that era. Prior to the novel I'd never heard much on the subject of slavery in Canada, thus I decided that I wanted my English paper to analyse the details surrounding her trial proceedings and use them to argue her sentence almost three hundred years later. To do this, I needed a variety of admirable sources to ensure my research was reliable, and the library provided those essential sources.

Upon starting my research, I was astounded by the sheer wealth of material available through the library. As I researched articles on Canadian slavery and the 1700's justice system I discovered a wealth of material, both reputable and questionable. By employing the online tools to refine my searches and using the university's access to a variety of search engines and archives I was able to find sources to support my deductions taken from Afua Cooper's works, and I even found flaws in a few of the historian's theories. With the guidance of my English professor I constructed a solid argument composed of archived testimonies, outdated laws, and blatant perjury.

After scouring the internet for more archival information on the Canadian slave I finally discovered another book pertaining to the slave-woman's case. "Le Procés de Marie-Joseph Angélique," written by Denyse Beaugrand-Champagne, was the only other book centered around Mme Angélique's case, yet as a French historical novel about a quite specific instance it was naturally unavailable through UVic's library. As I required the book to give my arguments further validity, I was able to take advantage of the interlibrary loan service offered by our library to obtain the novel from an Albertan university over a matter of weeks, and succeeded in extracting invaluable information from it to use as evidence in my arguments.

I retain a great deal of pride surrounding the final product of that research paper. I was able to combine research from many scholarly sources to create an argument about a subject that intrigued me; a process that I'd never imagined would be so engaging and rewarding. Without the library's many sources my citations list would be subpar, and I would have been forced to dedicate myself to a topic I had little interest in. The library's support and resources have enabled me to create post-secondary level work with which I am proud of, and I'm certain that I will continue to utilize its many offerings throughout my academic career.