

**William Petrie Graduate Student Library Scholarship 2021 Recipient**  
**By Lynn (Yu Ling) Ng, Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**Award-winning Essay**

As much a note of appreciation as an award application, in this brief letter I hope to convey my immense gratitude to UVic Libraries for facilitating an enjoyable and smooth sailing research experience for my final paper assignment for *POLI 412/533: Migration, Nationalism and Identity in Asia*.

My paper was titled “Migrant Autonomies in Singapore’s Migrant Domestic Worker (MDW) Industry”. Summon’s advanced search function enabled me to narrow down my search by source type, experiment with different keywords, and find crucial pieces of evidence almost immediately. These ranged from educational literature reviews to state policy documents on guest worker regimes in Asia to contemporary case study articles by country to archival tidbits about 16<sup>th</sup> century indentured labor, all indispensable for my assignment. The *Abkhazi Archives* and *Herbert Geddes Collection* are satisfyingly informative, since a consideration of the Japanese Empire is essential yet often downplayed vis-à-vis the British Empire. The photos of Meiji-era Japan provide insights into this pioneer developmental state’s manufacturing expertise, a huge driver of Japan’s wartime military stronghold in Southeast Asia.

Summon has also proved to be an inspiring gateway with its smart identification and filtering of sources according to thematic linkages. To my pleasant surprise, when I entered the keywords ‘Asian migration’, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Sunil Amrith, 2011) came up alongside *Wife or Worker?: Asian Women and Migration* (Nicola Piper and Mina Roces, 2003). These works are typically not associated with each other, but this search result helped me establish intellectual connections which were otherwise unapparent. Some potential ideas emerge sporadically during seminar discussions, but Summon contributed to turning these fleeting thoughts into well-

developed written arguments. Previously, I was in a collegiate university where libraries are run separately, so establishing a level of consistency in search results across the different platforms was a considerable obstacle. Summon's centralized effectiveness was a welcome change.

The dedicated staff team at UVic Libraries went beyond providing multimedia access to materials. I attended a database workshop hosted by Ying Liu, Learning and Research Librarian of Asian Studies. This session introduced me to the search engines accessible through Summon as well as introduced potential ideas for new subscriptions to platforms like [DuXiu \(读秀\)](#), now part of the library's subscription network. Participants were given opportunities to experiment with the suggested databases and to provide comments, which gave me a sense of participation in contributing to the library's resources. I came across collections of ancient Chinese classics on the topic of filial piety which were useful for my interpretation of the narratives of migrant caregivers, not to mention complementing the numerous empirical studies on the topic.

Thanks to the team of passionate librarians and outreach staff, I was able to find abundant empirical data for small but significant cases like Singapore. My research paper has since then developed into a forthcoming conference paper. I continue to be impressed by the speed and volume of real-time updates in Summon's database as my search terms get narrower and more theoretically focused.