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<center>Research Gone Wild: A Researching Catastrophe</center>

Researching is like anything else: it requires patience, diligence, planning, and above all,

practice. The latter is my greatest failing. Perhaps, however, it is more a failing of the modern

education system. Throughout the course of my academic career, I have always felt weakest

when writing research papers, especially with the thousands of internet sources at my disposal

just begging to be used. I have always done well on my research papers, but I have always

struggled. I suppose that I should take the blame for at least some of this weakness, but I would

prefer to shrug most of the blame on my education. In high school, I never had a research paper.

In college, I have had one, and that was in CRTW with Professor Weeks. All of this

notwithstanding, I endeavor now to convey the tragedy that is my research methodology.

If I were to write a paper on William Blake's poem "The Garden of Love," I would begin

by stretching and cracking my fingers over my black keyboard, hoping that in this paper I do not

have to write a question mark: my keyboard is missing that key. I get online using Mozilla

Firefox and immediately go to my handy dandy poem search engine: www.poemhunter.com.

After saying no to a popup, I simply type in the poem's name and I immediately get it back at the

top of a list of hits. I read the poem. After sitting back in my wooden chair, munching on a

piece of candy corn, I brainstorm about the possible meaning of the poem. I keep a notepad and

a pen next to my laptop on my computer desk at all times; I take those out now and begin jotting

down initial feelings, thoughts, and possible directions I could go for writing a paper. After this,

I usually get out my class notebook or pull up another word processor document. I begin to jot

my ideas down in an outline. If this is a persuasive essay, which I am assuming it is because it is

a research paper, I want to have already written a basic intro, a statement of the problem or main

persuasive point, and about three points for my body paragraphs. I will worry about the

conclusion later.

Now, I actually begin to do research for the poem. I have never done an English research

paper, so I imagine that different tactics are necessary than when I am researching something for

my major, Political Science. I plan a trip to the library, usually about a day in advance. I will

plan to stay there for approximately an hour. I go in, and I open the Dacus online catalog. I

select the subject option. In the search box, I type "William Blake's The Garden of Love." I get

nothing back that is of any use to me, so I select the title option.   With this option selected, I get

several interesting books I could use. I continue doing this for about thirty minutes. After this

phase, I go pick out the books, and that is about all the time I will spend in the library. As

examples, some books that I would look at, if not actually check out, would be William Blake,

His Philosophy and Symbols by S. Foster Damon, William Blake: The Politics of Vision by

Mark Schorer, and William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld.

Knowing that I am a Political Science major, I am fairly certain that the book by Mark Schorer

would definitely be one of my three literary sources. The other books sounded intriguing;

William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols would likely have pertinent information about what

themes Blake would have used in his work, such as his problem with religious authority.

William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon would also be good source of essays on the Blake's

work, something that could possibly provide me with several different articles to use. Usually, I

prefer having at least three hardcover sources when doing research; it provides me with a sense

of security knowing that at least three of my sources have been read and edited by established

publishers. On the internet, I have seen a great deal of trash being thrown around, and so I want

to avoid as much of that as possible. Assuming I get three books at the library, I then want about three more sources from an online database or webpage.

My first stop is Google, not for anything that I will necessarily use but to get a feel for the poem and what other people think about it. I also want to look up a quick bibliography of William Blake, such as the one located at http://www.online-literature.com/blake/. In the Google search menu, I type in "William Blake's Poem The Garden of Love." I also type in "William Blake" and "The Garden of Love" to see if any new hits come up for those searches. I then move to online databases. Going the Dacus Library homepage, I clink the hyperlink that says "List of All Databases." I search several databases for articles, such as jstor.com and lexisnexus.com. My initial search for both is simple and the same as it has been before: "William Blake and The Garden of Love." Between the two, I would probably find jstor.com more useful for the purpose of looking up scholarly articles. Just in skimming, I found one article on jstor.com that looked intriguing: Blake: A Crisis of Love and Jealousy. Since the theme of my essay would probably focus on some personal aspect of Blake's life and work, this essay would work perfectly since "The Garden of Love" seems riddled with symbols of love, spirituality, and religious authority. The only left would be reading all of these articles and writing my paper.

In conclusion, I write this entire paper to say that I am fairly convinced that I do what Nicholas Carr calls "power browse" (Carr). I not only do this with online articles, but with books as well. I once wrote a nine page paper on a four hundred page book—having only read fifteen pages. I made an "A" on the paper. Now, in a way this is an advantage that I can use. I can read less, and yet still grasp the purpose and intent of the author. Yet in the end, this means that I am coming to conclusions that are only half-informed, judgments that are only partially

thought out, and writing papers that are only partially supported by the text. In the end, I have to admit: my research habits are a catastrophe.