

From Assimilation to Integration: The 20th Century Transformation of Red Cloud Indian School

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Library Research Award Essay

Since I first began researching for my honors history thesis in spring 2020, the Hesburgh Library resources have been invaluable to informing and narrowing my research question, allowing me to continue research under COVID-19 restrictions, and ultimately researching for and writing my thesis this past academic year. In Spring 2019, I was tasked with creating a guiding question to inform my thesis research and to compile a historiography on my chosen topic. As someone who had neither conducted archival research nor undertaken a project of such magnitude before, I relied heavily upon the guidance of the Hesburgh librarians and archivists. They educated me on how to communicate with other archives, request resources via Interlibrary Loan, and strategically use databases such as OneSearch and WorldCat to identify primary and secondary literature. When COVID-19 restricted my physical access to the library and its resources, I met with Rachel Bohlmann over Zoom to discuss which databases would be of interest to me, given my interest in Native American educational history. Sources from two that she directed me to—American Indian Newspapers and ProQuest Historical Newspapers—feature prominently in my thesis. For my historiography review, I collected the books and articles included from Hesburgh's physical and digital collection and Interlibrary Loan PDF scans. These sources eventually became the secondary source foundational background of my thesis research.

Now that I had a solid foundation of secondary source literature, I was aware of what other scholars were arguing about my topic and where gaps in the scholarship lie. Over the summer of 2020, I had used this knowledge to investigate what the relevant primary sources were and where they were located. With COVID-19 restrictions limiting travel and grant awards, I spent much time researching archives in order to figure out if, how, and when I could access their materials. I refined my research question based on these findings, as it was no longer

feasible for me to engage in a topic as broad as I had initially hoped to. After discussions with Hesburgh archivists and the archival staff of Marquette University, the library I had identified as the one with the most helpful archival material, I was able to create a working thesis. I coordinated accessing a number of Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission documents with both sets of archivists through microfilm loan once I had returned to campus. Even though my plans to engage with archival research had changed drastically—I could no longer visit archives in person nor could I access the sources until I had returned to campus in the fall—Hesburgh staff were more than willing to help me successfully research remotely over the summer. Not only did they provide me with research resources, but they also provided insight into *how* to research.

I despaired over the prospect of fitting such a monumental undertaking into the short span of two semesters but thought that I could not conduct further research until I accessed the microfilms in the fall. My discussions with Hesburgh staff members helped me realize that the path to successful research is not always linear and that there were a number of avenues I could take to continue my research at home. I received PDF scans of more secondary literature, recommendations for a number of books written by historical actors about which I was writing, and the suggestion that I reach out to scholars of the topic via Zoom to solicit their insight on my ever-developing argument. Thus, the summer, which I had previously imagined would be a time absent of progress on my project, became one of my most fruitful research experiences. I entered the next semester with a firm grasp on what I wanted to argue, how I envisioned that I would go about arguing it, and an idea of what to look for in the primary source microfilms.

Fall 2020 marked the beginning of my official thesis research and writing. Upon the reception of the microfilms when I returned to campus, I was promptly given a tutorial by Hesburgh staff members on how to view and scan the films using library technology. Since I was

once again able to physically access Hesburgh Library, I made frequent use of library spaces to transcribe my sources and outline my chapters. The quiet atmosphere of the Reading Rooms helped me to focus deeply on the information I was working through; the ability to reserve a study room allowed me to schedule intentional time to write and to save a seat for a member of my thesis class to write with me. I finished the semester with a full thesis outline, complete with corresponding primary source transcription documents, as well as one drafted chapter. This semester has witnessed me undertake the writing of my second and third chapters and do further research to fill in any gaps I have discovered. I ordered a second batch of microfilms and have continued to comb newspaper databases for relevant documents for this purpose, which has helped me to more completely flesh out my argument and add nuance and contextual background to it. While I am not yet finished with the project, I have completed the vast majority of its substantial research-based content, a feat I cannot have imagined surmounting without the aid of Hesburgh resources and staff.

The support and access that the Hesburgh Library has provided throughout the three semesters that I have worked on my senior thesis have helped me overcome the many challenges that I faced along the way. From learning for the first time how to conduct archival research and undertake such a serious and lengthy research project as a thesis to working together to circumvent the unforeseen difficulties of COVID-19, the Hesburgh Library has walked beside me during my journey. Most significantly, it has fostered in me a love for the research process and inspired me to pursue graduate studies in history after I complete my year of post-graduate service.