

Dr. John Archer Library Award: Reflective Essay

From September 2018 to November 2018, I made significant use of the University of Regina's Library resources and services to help me complete research for a scholarly edition in Dr. Susan Johnston's English 349: Methods in Literary History. I researched a Pre-Raphaelite painting titled *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* composed in 1866-7 by William Holman Hunt. My goal for choosing Hunt's painting was to represent a possible trajectory, or timeline, of adaptation. I chose an origin point to land on, which was the original inspiration from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* dated 1349-51. I realized how significantly in-depth my research would be for I desired to research three significant moments of the painting's adaptation: (1) the story of Lisabella and Lorenzo in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, (2) John Keats' *Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil*, and (3) the Pre-Raphaelite's study and depiction of Isabella as a female subject.

My in-depth and multilayered library research took me across wide ranges of research from facsimile reproductions of manuscripts and visual art, letters, memoirs, biographical and source texts, catalogues, modern criticism, to adaptation theory. Due to requiring serious research and library hours, I used various types of library sources and services. Kate Cushon helped me accurately cite and reference complicated source texts like holograph manuscripts held in libraries, which I found on online databases for primary sources like British Literary Manuscripts Online. The English 349 research guide in the Archer Library catalogue also helped me find reliable databases and sources. The quick find search tool and databases like JSTOR, ProQuest, ARTSTOR and more helped me find articles, journals, essays, and digitized visual art.

My research also relied on books within the library's collections. What stands out in my mind is my first use of the Archer Library's Special Collections and Archives. I sought the copy of *The Decameron; or Ten days' entertainment of Boccaccio* (1894) edited by Thomas Wright; the oldest, physical copy I could reach without having to travel out of the country to another museum's or library's archives. The experience of holding and reading a 124-year-old text was a new and exciting experience for a research fanatic like me. I experienced another first from the journals and catalog collections for library use only. In this section, I had to locate a catalog of books and manuscripts at the Keats-Shelley Memorial House in Rome to verify research about the circulation of proofs for Keats' *Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil* (1818-20), a poem which I reproduced in my research project after finding a digitized holograph manuscript held at the British Library. I loaned many books from Archer Library's collection; however, I also requested interlibrary loans for *The Decameron: Its Sources and Analogues* by A. Collingwood Lee and *Poetry Manuscripts at Harvard* edited by Jack Stillinger.

From my in-depth, wide range of research and serious library hours, I gained invaluable skills reaching from online, primary, secondary, and archival research. I am also more knowledgeable in how to cite and reference multiple, complex sources that fall under ambiguous categories of type. I improved my ability to connect multiple threads of research from contexts arching over hundreds of years to offer full insight into an artifact. I strengthened my confidence and familiarity in maneuvering around the various services and resources Archer Library offers. Overall, I was able to produce a beautiful scholarly edition that is comprehensive in structure, organization, detail and scope of research. I am immensely proud of the months of research I accomplished and the academic skills I sharpened, skills I can apply to my future research projects in honours, masters, and beyond my academic career.