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ULRA Application Essay

This academic year I engaged in a semester-long independent research project using the *Lenore Mooney Papers* located in Rare Books and Special Collections at Hesburgh Library. These papers, which contain correspondences between two Americans, Lenore Mooney and her nephew Charles Bayly, illustrate the period in both of their lives when they were serving abroad in France in different capacities during the First World War. Lenore Mooney engaged in charitable work in Paris during the war, while Charles Bayly drove an ambulance near the front. Using these letters, I was able to conduct a research project analyzing how two individuals situated themselves within the wider context of the war while determining what effect the war had on their identities. This was the first experience I have had using primary source documents to create a significant and original contribution to the study of the First World War. This process allowed me to obtain firsthand research experience while engaging with an ongoing dialogue about the First World War. Throughout this project I have come to appreciate that the University of Notre Dame and Hesburgh Libraries are world-class resources for producing new and innovative research in the field of history.

Prior to the start of this research project, I was aware that Rare Books and Special Collections contained manuscripts and documents from a wide variety of sources and time periods. When I began to consider topics that I wanted to research, I realized the depth of the collections that are available in Hesburgh Libraries and was easily able to find a collection of materials to serve as the foundation for my research. Without the acquisition of these materials, I never would have been able to conduct research on the aspect of the First World War that I was interested in. I am intrigued by personal narratives and how an individual defines themselves in
relation to the world around them. My goal was to examine the social, cultural, and political themes of the First World War through the eyes of a few people to see how these themes were interpreted at a local and personal level. Examining these personal narratives would not have been possible if not for the *Lenore Mooney Papers*. Hesburgh Libraries were instrumental in supplying me with the resources I needed to ensure my research was thorough and high-quality. Instead of only reading about history through secondary sources, this real-world application of my studies has been instrumental in shaping my academic experience and has allowed me to engage in the process of historical research.

The Department of History at Notre Dame teaches first-rate historical research. Using the skills that I have developed in my undergraduate career in conjunction with the resources offered by Hesburgh Libraries, I was given the opportunity to conduct research as a professional would. My education consisted not only of studying the theory of historical research, but of opportunities to put these theories into practice and engage with the wider scholarly community.

The quality of advising and interaction with Hesburgh librarians was also instrumental in allowing me to complete this project. Julie Tanaka, curator of Special Collections, was instrumental in aiding my original search for primary source materials, and was consistently available for guidance and instruction throughout the research process. Without her input, this project would not have existed. The staff of Rare Books and Special Collections was also accessible to answer any questions that arose during the semester, and were helpful in teaching me the appropriate way to handle rare documents.

While the majority of my research took place within Rare Books and Special Collections, I also utilized other library resources in order to complete my project in a timely and effective
manner. The inter-library loan system allowed me to access books quickly and efficiently during my research. It is impossible to discern all of the sources you will need during the research process because questions arise as you are writing. The inter-library loan system allowed me to request books as the need arose without having to stall my research.

Overall, Hesburgh Libraries provide comprehensive and diverse resources for engaging in all aspects of the research and the writing process. From the online tools provided, to the extensive collection of manuscripts, and the availability and knowledge of the librarians, Hesburgh Libraries are the first and most effective resource I used during this process. I was able to integrate a diverse range of sources and approach my project with a confidence and purpose that I would not have otherwise been able to achieve. The resources provided allowed me the opportunity to create my own historical narrative, and to become a contributor, rather than only a spectator, in the historical community. The research skills I have developed, which were made possible in part because of the resources of Hesburgh Libraries, will be instrumental as I continue my academic journey.