Before taking English 122: Research and Writing, I knew little about the Bankier Library’s website. I had only used the database Academic ASAP for research done in my public speaking course. I was unaware of all the other tools the library’s website had to offer. Thankfully, before we were assigned our first research paper, the class attended an information session in the library. There we learned about all the different databases the library has to offer and how to use them to our advantage. With this knowledge under our belts, we were assigned our first research paper: The Shocking Scandals Research Paper.

I chose to research the CIA’s testing of LSD on unsuspecting people in the 1950’s. I had briefly heard about this on a show on the history channel, so I had some background information on the topic but not much. To start the research process, I did a preliminary reading of the topic. I started out using Academic ASAP using various keyword phrases such as CIA and LSD. Academic ASAP then led me to an article in the New York Times that proved to be extremely useful. I switched from Academic ASAP to Lexus Nexus and ProQuest because these databases provided me with much more information. I discovered that the New York Times was one of the first newspapers to break the news of this scandal; so much of my preliminary reading was done through articles available on these websites (some of the articles dated as far back as 1977). As I learned the names of the key players involved in the scandal, I was able to refine my search more by using new keywords such as Sydney Gottlieb and CIA or Sydney Gottlieb and LSD. It was hit
or miss and got frustrating at times, but I learned that research is time consuming and it pays to be persistent.

Once I had most of my preliminary reading done, I learned that I could only use the same source three times. Professor Parker taught me that in order to have a non-biased paper, so too must your research; which meant using more than one or two sources. I ended up weeding out a lot of the articles I found on ProQuest and Lexus Nexus. This was a difficult step to do, as these sources proved to be extremely useful. I ended up only keeping the articles that gave me something different that the other articles didn’t have. I moved my research to the internet and decided to use the search engine *Dogpile*. I learned from Professor Parker that *Dogpile* searches different databases instead of its own, and gives you the top ten results from each search engine. I was lucky to hit the jackpot with an article that created a domino effect. From this article, I was lead to various other articles that ended up filling in all the blank spots in my research. I evaluated every website to determine its authority by using a checklist that was given to us in class. This checklist taught me to check for the purpose of the website, the accuracy of information provided, the authority of the author, the currency of the site, and the objectivity of the site.

Once I had authoritative internet sources and my first round of research was complete I was able to narrow my topic down to a specific part of the LSD scandal that my paper would focus on. I created an outline that included my thesis and supporting ideas based on the research I had acquired. Through writing the outline, I was able to create connections between my sources. I organized my research by asking who agrees with whom, who disagrees with whom, and who adds something new? Once my outline was finished, I realized I didn’t have enough information on the public opinion of the scandal and how it came to an end, so I geared up for
the second part of my research. This was much easier than the first time around because I knew exactly what it was I was looking for. With this step done, I set out to start writing my paper.

From this paper, I feel I have grown by leaps and bounds. Professor Parker has taught me that it’s ok to sit and stare at the wall for 20 minutes, every writer does. I am no longer scared to do a research paper. I feel much more confident about what databases to use and how to tell if a source is authoritative or not. I have a much better grasp on how to navigate the library’s website as well as how to use it to my advantage. I learned that research is a lot like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. If you are persistent and don’t give up, the pieces will eventually fall into place.