

## 2012 Winning Essay by Melanie Mosher

The process of writing my senior research paper was an interesting challenge and taught me a lot about what goes in to producing a quality piece of historical research. The resources provided by the Christopher Center, some of Valparaiso University's faculty, and resources outside the university were invaluable to developing a thesis and supporting an argument. As with most extensive projects, I hit a few road blocks I had to overcome to produce "Pushing German Out of Schools: Efforts to Ban German Language Programs During World War I."

When starting the research process, I wanted to choose a topic that dealt with two of my passions: German history and linguistics. After many discussions with supervising Professor Nelly Blacker-Hanson, I finally decided to research German language instruction in schools during the time of World War I. Furthermore, I decided to use Chicago as a case study. I chose Chicago largely because of its proximity to Valpo and the assumed vast availability of primary and secondary resources for my topic. With this specific case study, I sought to prove that the First World War was a key event that made Americans associate speaking English with being American. In a nation of immigrants, one thing that could unite the diverse population was the English language. Americans therefore sought to push foreign language instruction, especially that of the enemy, out of schools in an effort to unite Americans in the war effort.

In finding sources to develop my argument and prove my thesis, the library resources were very valuable. I also reached beyond the Valparaiso University holdings in order to complete my research project. During the research process, I found many articles on Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and ERIC. I also found a variety of resources about Chicago Germans, English-only policies, and foreign language instruction in schools in the VU stacks and on WorldCat. I was able to find all of my secondary resources either on campus at Valpo, through the databases to which Valpo subscribes or through Interlibrary Loan.

Finding primary resources, however, was difficult. For the Chicago case study, I first tried to locate the German-language press that was published in Chicago during that time. With generous help from Stephanie Frederick in Interlibrary Loan, I was able to locate the Illinois Staats-Zeitung, the largest ethnic press published in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. We ordered the Illinois Staats-Zeitung from the Center for Research Libraries. The newspapers bound into books that arrived were fascinating since they were a direct representation of the early twentieth century Chicago Germans. However, as interesting as the Illinois Staats-Zeitung was to read, we were unable to locate the editions that would likely have provided the evidence to support my thesis. For unknown reasons, the 1917 through 1920 editions either never existed or went missing.

After hitting this roadblock with the Illinois Staats-Zeitung, I had to search for other primary resources. I met with Professor Rob Vega to search for documents and articles in the Valpo database subscriptions. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate new resources I had not yet discovered in my own extensive search. I next turned to Professor Alan Bloom, Valpo's resident Chicago scholar. Professor Bloom put me into contact with two of the leading scholars in the field of Germans in Chicago and suggested I look at the Chicago Tribune archives. Unfortunately, Valpo does not subscribe to the ProQuest Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune database, so I had to travel to a Chicago Public Library branch to access the Tribune archives. The resources that I was able to access through Valpo were

essential in my research process, but I wish that Valpo had a subscription to the Chicago Tribune archival database. It would likely prove to be a valuable resource to many Valpo students and faculty.

In completing this research project, I was able to use the many valuable resources Valparaiso University, especially the library, has to offer. As a starting point, the stacks in the Christopher Center provided me with innumerable resources to develop a topic and eventually find information to support my argument. For the more specific information I required, books and articles I ordered through Interlibrary Loan provided me with further evidence and support for my thesis. With every research project I do, my familiarity with the wealth of VU resources continues to expand. With the help of librarians, staff and faculty, I was eventually able to find all the necessary resources to successfully complete this research project.

