

The development of my dissertation for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership for Social Justice and my doctoral seminar (EDLA 7953) here at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) required extensive utilization of library resources. My dissertation, entitled “The Local-executive Governance Model in Catholic Parochial Elementary Schools: Understanding Pastors’ Perspectives” examined pastors’ attitudes toward the dominant model of Catholic school governance, called the local-executive governance model (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, 2015). In this model the pastor, not the principal, is the head of the school and is called to fulfill spiritual, educational, and managerial roles usually expected of the principal (Ciriello, 1996). The library was instrumental in developing my research, teaching me to use effective search strategies with library resources, and evaluating and later selecting the best sources in order to make my original contribution to the field of Catholic school research.

In developing my research topic, I had to consider not only my personal research interests but also determine how my research fits into the existing body of literature on Catholic school governance. In looking in this niche field of education I had my first encounter with the library. To start this search, I first consulted with library staff when they visited one of my doctoral classes to present their resources. I learned that in my field most of the research would be centralized in journal articles, particularly from publications such as the *Journal of Catholic Education* in addition to Catholic Church documents and a selection of books. These documents helped me to develop my research question which changed slightly in scope and coverage due to the nature of the literature I found. I started by focusing on pastors’ preferences for the qualifications of their principals, however I found that topic already researched extensively so I pivoted to examining pastor’s perceptions of the current governance models of their parochial schools.

The library assisted me in developing my search strategies for my dissertation in a few ways. I scheduled research consultations with the library staff that helped guide my research and see what options were available to me. For example, I was not aware of the interlibrary loan program and LINK+, which gave me access to any material I would need. One tool I found useful was how an interlibrary loan request

could be put in for an article instead of just a book. There were times when I required a highly specialized article from a journal not carried by LMU and after a request through interlibrary loan or LINK+ the library staff acquired the text quickly. An additional benefit of scheduling consultations with library staff is their areas of expertise. The librarian I spoke to was an expert in education and taught me how to adjust my searches on LMU's databases, such as ERIC and JSTOR, to find credible and quality research.

I wanted to ensure that my dissertation was not only accurate in my own research but also built upon credible previous research. In searching LMU's databases I found the peer reviewed filter to be a useful tool since it ensured the research I was including in my literature review was quality and respected among the academic community. In one instance I was able to compare and contrast various viewpoints on hiring practices, some of which disagreed with each other, by using credible sources found in the library database ERIC. Since these various viewpoints were peer reviewed, I was able to demonstrate that there is a wide diversity of legitimate and thought-out opinions about a topic such as hiring practices.

The library's manifold resources such as research consultations, interlibrary loans, and databases not only gave me access to a large body of literature necessary for my research but also gave me the opportunity to develop my own interpretations of my particular topic. There were times when some of the literature validated my thesis argument but also challenged it, which gave me the chance to incorporate both sides of the argument in my dissertation to present a more balanced view of the local-executive governance mode in Catholic education. Thanks to the resources of the library, I was able to make my own original contribution to the academy.

References

Ciriello, M. (1996). *Expectations for the Catholic school principal: A handbook for pastors and parish school committees*. U.S. Catholic Conference.

Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities. (2015). *Breathing new life in Catholic schools: An exploration of governance models*. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/k-12/upload/FADICA-Catholic-Schools-Goverance-White-Paper-FINAL-12-17-2015.pdf>