Academic Writing Guide – Stage 1, Part 2

James talking about finding sources

Sue: So um, also taking you back, if you can remember, to the idea that you would need to draw on the work of other scholars; that you would need to draw on other sources to support the points you were trying to make in your essay. Was that a novel idea? Was it something you'd expected to be asked to do?

James: It was expected, but the method was unexpected. Because at A levels I'd used sources, but the concept of like *engaging* with the sources was novel for me.

Sue: Yeah so it was 'how do you actually use a source?' rather than 'can I just randomly find one?'

James: Yeah.

Sue: And from your experience now, from having done this multiple times, does that/is that still quite a difficult thing to do?

James: No. No I'm much more able to think about the quotes and the sources and it/the skills set rolls backwards into research as well. So I'll find a source on the Library Search and start reading it, and I'll be able to sort of pick up quite quickly whether or not I'm going to be able to use it. Not because it's necessarily a bad source, but the way that I personally write, and the essay that I'm creating, sometimes they just don't quite fit together like they should do.

Sue: And that whole using Library Search, how familiar do you feel now? How comfortable are you with that?

James: Certainly more comfortable than when I started. It's a very… It's not the most user-friendly search engine! But I think having the opportunity to be sort of walked through it is really helpful and I think to some extent everybody finds their own style in using it and extracting use out of it. But yeah, I think for me certainly that all started with the Foundation year and the sort of the explicit time that was set aside for us to get to know it and use it and explore the different settings on it.