

## **William Petrie Graduate Student Library Scholarship 2019 Recipient**

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### **Award-winning Essay**

As I approach the final stages of my doctoral journey, I have really come to appreciate the vital role the University of Victoria library has played in this epic undertaking. There are three ways in particular in which the library has been an invaluable partner for my research.

The first is the books that are physically on the shelves. I research cave art from the Ice Age in Europe, and while it is certainly a topic that I find fascinating with its intersecting themes of human evolution and adaptation, cognitive and cultural development, as well as symbolic and graphic invention, it also happens to be a very small field of study. And yet, the UVic library has a surprising number of these books in its collection, including some out-of-print works that were crucial for building my database of cave art sites. This digital repository is the foundation of my investigation into the mysterious geometric signs from this era.

The second is the incredible range of online resources I can access from anywhere. As so often happens when you are reading a book or journal article, there is a reference in the text to another source that could be useful for your project. Thanks to the UVic library's online gateway program, I am able to log in from any computer, search through their extensive database of electronic journals, and download the article in question on the spot. This has been helpful in a number of instances including when I am overseas in the field, or working late at night outside regular library hours, or most commonly on days when I am working from home because I have young children.

The third and possibly most crucial way in which the UVic library has assisted in the researching and writing of my dissertation has been through the interlibrary loan program. My main objective is to identify large-scale spatial and temporal patterns in geometric sign use during the European Ice Age, something that is only possible when I have accurate data for each cave art site. While some caves are well-known with easily accessible data, there are also a number where information is extremely limited, especially in regards to the signs. With Paleolithic archaeology and art research tracing its roots back to scholars working predominantly in France and Spain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of the initial (and sometimes only) reports written about cave art sites were published in obscure local or regional journals. The ILL team has gone above and beyond numerous times to track down these sources for me, resulting in the most comprehensive database of geometric cave art anywhere in the world.

While the scholarship may have been the original impetus for writing this essay, in many ways this is also a letter of appreciation. The library has been an important resource throughout my graduate degrees at UVic, and when I defend my dissertation this fall, I will be standing there in part thanks to you.