

As part of the Interior Design Capstone Studio, we take a class called lovingly by the students as “Gulen’s research class.” In actuality, this class is called ARC 436: Research & Programming, and it is the culmination of three years of design research work, all wrapped up into one sprint to produce an undergraduate thesis. In contrast to many research projects, this is a project that I had approximately fifteen weeks to complete, from start to finish, so when I say sprint, it truly felt like a 100m dash to the finish line. This experience brought me immense satisfaction, joy, and even frustration at times, but ultimately it was incredibly rewarding and strengthened my research abilities. Senior interior design students take this class as a prerequisite for our spring capstone design studio (ARC 408), and this thesis dictates all the design choices for that studio, which means that it is crucial to produce a robust, factual, and broad thesis.

My two-part project (thesis + design work) is intended to be a case study on how hotels and resorts can utilize principles of universal design and research-based methods to create more inclusive experiences and environments for guests who are neurodiverse. The thesis is divided into five main parts, all of which present unique research challenges. The introduction and literature review required a deep understanding of the history of neurodiversity, autism, disability studies, and advocacy efforts, as well as a deep dive into tourism, hospitality, the history of the modern hotel, and wellness. The synthesis of these research topics was then an analysis of accessibility within tourism and experiences of individuals traveling with autism spectrum disorder. For this first part of the paper, my sources consisted of several physical books and countless journal articles sourced through the library, Ohiolink, and ILL, including databases such as Elsevier, JSTOR, Sage Journals, and Taylor & Francis online, but also included wildcards such as UN treaties, conference publications, and podcasts. Examining the history of autism through research done by Steve Silberman and his novel *NeuroTribes* and contrasting it with more recent books including Donovan & Zucker’s *In A Different Key: The Story of Autism* and articles that debate Silberman’s research helped provide a well-rounded look at our understanding of autism. One of the highlights of this process for me was reading *The American Hotel: An Anecdotal History* by Jefferson Williamson, procured through Miami’s library. This book was published in 1930 and was an incredible look at the early history of hotels, but also

provided a first person look into what he thought the future of the hotel was going to be like. It was astounding to read through and find little details, like the hand-glued in dedication.

The second part of my thesis links the thesis to the design project I am currently completing this semester. The selection of a building and the associated building documentation is crucial to understanding the history of the building, the impact of the site, and helps decide building program moving forward. As I am working with an old building for a historical reuse project, I had to first find a building that was large enough to accommodate at least 60,000 square feet of building program, and one that was situated within an area that made sense as a destination for a hotel. This research spanned the library website, online forums of abandoned buildings, combing through real estate leasing websites, and classic google searches of “abandoned factory.” Once I had a site chosen, I utilized the library website for resources, as well as filed many public records requests with building and zoning departments, historical societies, records and archives departments, and fire marshals/building inspectors.

The remaining three parts of the thesis are precedent studies, typology studies, and a project description. These sections were specific to my goals for the project based upon the research I had done previously within the paper. The project description includes the program established through the research, precedents, and includes research into design considerations for resorts and neurodiversity. These considerations were based upon journal articles and books from the library, Ohiolink, and ILL. Two of the most valuable sources throughout the project description were from Magda Mostafa, and their research into establishing the ASPECTSS™ Design Index, which will become a guideline for my design project.

Beyond sources, this thesis was done in a systematic fashion—each section built upon the next, which is not often how I tend to work on my projects. I faced major setbacks because of this—it took weeks to find a building that was suitable for the design project, which meant that all the subsequent sections had to be delayed. While this could have been devastating to the project, I instead worked proactively to utilize the library’s resources and find materials in advance for the upcoming sections, as well as went back into the literature review and had the opportunity to dive back into it in far greater detail thanks to new resources I had received via Ohiolink and ILL.

As an undergraduate student studying Interior Design, I don’t get many opportunities to utilize the research resources of the library system—but through my Arts Management co-major,

my minor in Art & Architecture history, and my Honors college classes, I have been introduced to the many resources of the libraries—so I was excited to finally have an opportunity to put those resources to the test. My education at Miami has without doubt been improved by my access to such a comprehensive library system. Because of the breadth of this project, I found myself utilizing a wide array of sources and I am grateful for the ability to produce comprehensive research and analysis because of the Miami University library.