Researching the music of a Renaissance composer little mentioned outside of his country requires much effort and creativity. As I soon discovered, English-language literature often overlooks the musical output of Central and Eastern Europe in its exploration of the Renaissance. More often mentioned are German, French, Italian or English composers but sources on the music of Poland during this era are very limited. In my initial stages of research, I was only able to find general mentions of my chosen composer, Mikołaj Gomółka. On the other hand, the French composer Claude Goudimel whom I chose as a Western counterpart initially seemed to be given more attention.

As it later turned out, neither composer’s musical output had been given much attention in English. Thanks to the fantastic resources available at the Fondren Library and to my ability to translate Polish and French sources I was able to fill this seeming gap and discover materials that allowed me to delve into a more original area of music research.

My research began with a general search through online catalogs of journal articles. I used all of the available materials in the Music section of the Fondren Library website, including RILM, the Music Index and RIPM. Quickly realizing the difficulty of finding sources associated strictly with Gomółka I began to look for more general sources about Polish and Slavonic music in the Renaissance. The online catalogs led me to find some articles about Polish and Slavonic music, as well as Renaissance sacred music in general. These sources included the articles by Gerald, Guelker-Cone, Jachimiecki, Stipp and Woodward. The articles were not immediately available in print but thanks to various
library agreements for online access I was able to download them immediately which was a huge help.

Free access to the New Grove Dictionary of Music was helpful in reading up on general biographical information and trying to find new leads for sources. This is perhaps the best and most exhaustive music encyclopedia available. Here I found articles on both Goudimel and Gomółka as well as clues in the reference section on how to find more sources.

Perhaps the most invaluable resource in the completion of this project was the WorldCat.org website together with Fondren Library’s participation in the Interlibrary Loan program. After my search of the Fondren catalog did not reveal relevant literature on the subject, WorldCat allowed me to find most of my book sources and a very interesting dissertation source. These were then delivered or scanned from libraries all over the country for free, which is phenomenal because it doesn’t impose a financial burden on a college student trying to find exotic or unavailable resources.

These books formed the basis for the more strictly historical portion of my research. Jarocinski’s book was a historical consideration of Polish music that gave me an excellent insight into the relationship of this repertory to the rest of European music. The book by Perz was especially helpful as it offered a complete analysis of Gomółka’s Psalter by a Polish musicologist who devoted his life to the subject. The master’s dissertation by Fishel was the only available and fairly modern source about the stylistic characteristics of Gomółka’s music.

Fondren’s research capabilities kept surprising me as my research went on. When it came time to think about analyzing primary sources I thought it might be impossible to
find the music scores for the works of Gomólka and Goudimel. As it turned out, our music library contained the complete works of Goudimel in the Brown Fine Arts Library. This took care of half the materials I needed to perform an analysis of primary sources. Finding Gomólka’s scores on the other hand, turned out to be more tricky and actually came about as a pleasant surprise.

Finding his score was the result of a related part of my research. As I was thinking about the musical settings I was about to analyze, I wanted to find out more about the authors of the vernacular texts. I was surprised to find extensive volumes on this in our library’s Polish Literature section as I was sure I would have to request such books via Interlibrary Loan. Among these sources I found an incredible source, namely, the complete works of the poet Jan Kochanowski, including his translation of the Psalms that was set by Gomólka.

As I looked through these volumes, to my surprise I found that they also contained two different scores of Gomólka’s music setting of Kochanowski’s text. One was a facsimile of the original published manuscripts written in mensural notation and the other volume contained a modern transcription compiled by the aforementioned Polish musicologist Mirosław Perz. I thought that finding any settings at all might be impossible, but instead I was able to find some incredible primary sources right here at the Fondren Library.

These primary sources were not in any of the literature that I explored so in order to do my own original analysis of them I had to translate the text myself. Because the texts for Gomólka were written in Renaissance Polish, this task was rather difficult. However, the Kochanowski collection once again proved to be especially helpful. It
included transcriptions of the poetry into Modern Polish which then made understanding and correctly translating the original into Modern English much easier.

Lastly, I used the Brown Fine Arts Library’s scanning capabilities and computers to compile and edit my Appendix of scores. I do not own a scanner so without these options I would not have been able to annotate any scores and illustrate my arguments with concrete examples. The technology available from the library is really helpful especially in terms of software which is often expensive for students.

Fondren Library’s capabilities for research were a tremendous advantage during the completion of my research paper. The easy availability of online resources like journals and encyclopedias helped in the general exploration of my topic. The Interlibrary Loan program was an invaluable source for obtaining most of the somewhat obscure literature on the subject. Lastly, our own collections including the Music collection and the Polish Literature collection surprised me with the amount and availability of primary sources required for me to complete my analysis of the subject.