

## How I Used Fondren's Resources

Perhaps the most significant way Fondren helped me with this project was by being my muse. The project description called for students to “take a critical environmental performance view of the spaces on campus in which [we] spend a good bit of time.” I deliberated several options, such as my residential college, the Rice Memorial Center, and even some academic buildings. But what place would fit this description better than Fondren, where I had recently taken to spending hours on end working in its reading room? The nature of Fondren, too, made it an ideal candidate. Since it is constantly full of occupants, open 24 hours on most days, and host to many book collections, I knew its needs would make it an interesting and complex building to study from the lens of sustainability.

To gather information for the project, I first tried online sources, with limited luck. I found general information about Fondren, but nothing that I could use to judge its sustainable (or unsustainable) practices. What I did find online was general information about green initiatives (like green roofs) and more about a library's needs (like the ideal temperature for preserving important collections), from which I was able to deduce what might or might not work in a library. Unsurprisingly, in order to get more specific information, using Fondren's resources yielded better results. I reached out to a reference librarian several times, and she helped me use Fondren's catalog more efficiently to find more books about greening libraries and a book about Fondren's architecture. I also went to the Circulation Desk, where I was referred to a couple of more books about Fondren. In the end, I did not use a lot of these sources as I narrowed down what I wanted my project to address. However, I learned so much about the catalog that I am sure I will use it again for future projects. I used to think one could research anything online, but

now I have a deep appreciation for the materials Fondren has at our disposal – materials that, to my initial surprise, have a lot of vital information not found on the web.

Lastly, one of my most important research methods was personally gathering data about Fondren that was not published anywhere. I went around the library and noted down observations about my areas of interest – the reading room, the bathrooms, and the study rooms. From these three general areas, I was able to get information relevant to every single one of the categories I was concentrating on (energy, water, etc.). I also reached out to several Rice staff, both through email and the phone, who were able to provide more information relevant to my paper. Overall, there was some data that was not feasible to collect or obtain (such as, how much of each office supply Fondren uses), but given the information these staff members gave me, I was able to make general/relative estimates.