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**Debt Research for Thomas Jefferson**

In choosing the topic for my Thomas Jefferson paper, I chose an area that had constantly perplexed me in my learning of the Founding Father. Jefferson’s debt seemed like something so avoidable when trying to understand it as a modern America, but upon further research I discovered that Jefferson’s debt was more a result of bad luck. While Jefferson’s debt is not a new topic, few historians have devoted much research on the subject. I was fortunate to have been loaned a copy of a dissertation, “Thomas Jefferson: A Personal Financial Biography,” by my professor, and discovered that there was one other book devoted to the topic. Fondren had a copy of this secondary source, *Principle and Interest*. Much of my essay relies on facts from Jefferson’s life, which came from my course reading, but the details for the paper were hard to come by. Aside from my course’s required biography on Thomas Jefferson and a collection of his writings, almost all of the resources I used to support my argument came from Fondren.

The monograph *Principle and Interest*, along with the dissertation loaned to me, provided an understanding of how Jefferson obtained his debt and his personal opinions on debt. With *Principle and Interest* in particular, I was able to understand the relationship between Jefferson’s actions towards the public debt and his opinions on private debt. Other secondary source contributions came from other books found in the Fondren stacks and from articles on JSTOR found through the library search tool.

Primary sources that I used came from a variety of places. When searching for information on United States laws that Jefferson would have faced compared to those that we face today, the Government Publications stacks provided me with copies of the United States
Statutes at Large and information about the Former Presidents Act. Other primary sources came from the plethora of letters Jefferson left behind, found in many volumes in Fondren. In one case, I was able to access the 19th Century Newspaper database, a relevant trial Fondren offered, in which information on George Washington’s own subtle debts was discovered.

As a history major, Fondren has provided me with books on multiple different subjects over and over again. Without these, especially on such a narrow topic as this one, I would not have been able to complete such work. Fondren provided me the support my paper needed, but also provided me with a special space. Almost all of my writing was completed in the comfort of Fondren, where my professor’s office was just upstairs. The ease of finding as many books as necessary from the stacks was especially useful for this long paper. With Fondren’s support, I was able to use a multitude of resources that provided new insights on the understanding of Jefferson’s debt. For me, it was satisfying to be able to write about a subject I was genuinely interested in because the resources necessary were available.