Despite the globalization of Cold War historiography, scholarship on Indonesia continues to lag behind. Substantively, my research essay *Saving Indonesia* aimed to make an original contribution to existing scholarship by undertaking the first comparative analysis of American, British, and Canadian Cold War policies toward Indonesia. From a research methods perspective, this comparative undertaking also presented its unique set of opportunities and challenges. First, a cross-analysis necessarily expanded the geographical and historiographical diversity of the references consulted. National archives and scholarly sources from the US, Britain, and Canada, were used as the primary reference and were further supplemented with additional Australian, New Zealand, and Indonesian sources. Second, the unequal levels of development of American, British, and Canadian historiography on Indonesia required me to tailor my research strategy according to the availability of relevant sources. While the lack literature on Canadian-Indonesian relations made the analysis of Canada’s Indonesia-policy highly challenging, it also presented me with an invaluable opportunity to fully undertake the task of a historian: to dig for fresh archival evidence and construct a narrative based on these facts.

Unsurprisingly, I began my research process at the U of T library website, *Onesearch*. By manipulating the search functions on *Onesearch*, i.e. adjusting the geographic, subject matter, and time variables, I was able to survey the existing literature on my research topic and easily identify the most up-to-date, reputable secondary works on the topic. I strategically began my research endeavour with a secondary, rather than primary, research as it allowed me to use the bibliographies of these recent publications to locate the key primary and secondary sources in the literature. I also began with works that were published after the major openings of American, British, and Canadian archives in the 1990s as they are generally considered to have the most accurate historical narratives before working backwards to older publications. To improve the efficiency of my research process, I also took advantage of bibliographical compilations (available only for American history) which provided a compendium of
important works on the topic relevant to my search. At this early stage of my research, I was especially fortunate for having the opportunity to initiate a direct correspondence with Canadian historian David Webster, the only one to have published a major book on Canada-Indonesia relations, to compare research notes and ensure that I had covered the most important scholarship on the topic.

Once I began my archival research, the human resources available on-campus became indispensable to my progress. Trinity College instructor Dr. John Dirks, Graham Library International Relations research librarian Courtney Lundrigan, and Robarts Library government publications staffs provided me with individual training sessions and research advice to help me navigate my way through various national archive databases—each with its own unique platform and required different search strategies. While the American and British archives were relatively user-friendly, the Canadian national archive, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), had a more complex layout and most of LAC documents were only available in print and must be requested individually. Dr. Dirks, who formerly served as a senior archivist at LAC, was particularly helpful in teaching me how to interpret access codes at LAC, identify archival reference numbers, and leverage Canada’s Access to Information Act to request restricted archives. On the whole, requesting documents from LAC required a holistic and strategic deliberation that included not only on the relevance of the materials, but also their access level and estimated processing time. To make up for archives that I was unable to find or retrieve, I utilized the primary evidence cited in the scholarly sources and other primary document materials, including memoirs and biographies, which were readily obtainable at U of T libraries and through the inter-library services, as well as the published oral history.

My overall research conduct was also shaped by the state of the historiographical development of my topic. While scholars have written rather extensively to explain the American and British policies toward Indonesia in the 1960s, the literature on Canadian-Indonesian relations remains in its early infancy—only one book has been published on Canada-Indonesia relations. Consequently, I adjusted my research approach accordingly to maximize my contribution to the literature based on the references I was able to gain access to: I utilized primary and secondary sources equally to synthesize and add
nuance the mature American and British historiographies while pursuing an archives-driven research to make fresh contributions towards building Canadian historiography on Indonesia. The lack of scholarly works on Canada-Indonesia relations made the analysis more difficult because there was not yet an “orthodox” historical narrative on the topic and an analytical framework to direct the archival search. Nonetheless, the underdeveloped state of Canadian historiography also provided ample space for new factual discoveries and original analytical frameworks. Ultimately, I was able to construct a historical narrative and shed some fresh interpretations on the topic by carefully surveying Canadian primary sources as well as strategically expanding the scope of my research by contextualizing Indonesia within Canada’s postwar foreign policy traditions and Canada’s relations with the Third World. By including the latter topics, I was able to draw on a richer and broader pool of scholarship. Moreover, to add structure and depth to the analysis of Canada’s Indonesia policy, I pursued an innovative strategy by examining the foreign policies of Australia and New Zealand toward Indonesia as these three Commonwealth countries prima facie faced comparable structural foreign policy environments and constraints that shaped their Indonesia-policies. During my archival search, keyword manipulation was also instrumental. For instance, while direct terms related to “Indonesia” were absent from Canada’s Cabinet Papers database, I instead searched for other terms that were indirectly related to Indonesia, such as “Malaysia” and the “Commonwealth” which gave me more search results and further informed my Indonesia-policy analysis.

All in all, this paper—fittingly the final research assignment I completed in undergraduate—provided me with the ultimate opportunity to apply the historical training I had cumulated over the last four years. It was in the process of writing this paper that I truly learned what it meant to be a historian—not just a “history student”. Beyond selecting sources, identifying bias, and synthesizing existing historical narratives, I was immersed in the process of determining the parameters of my own search, digging for new evidence from archives, and proposing new analytical frameworks to eventually construct a historical narrative. Besides the invaluable research experience, this process has also taught me one crucial lesson, which I will undoubtedly cherish as I step onto the next stage in my career: a
good historical narrative depends not just on the historian’s commitment and ability, but also the support she receives; for that I am very grateful to have the opportunity to work closely alongside U of T and Trinity librarians, and my course instructors.