Book-to-screen adaptations are effective publicity for books. In the case of Jay Asher’s *Thirteen Reasons Why*, the book climbed to No. 1 on the USA TODAY best seller list following the release of the Netflix series in March 2017. However, the TV show has been heavily criticized in the media for its graphic and mature content, and has led to censorship of the book in schools in the United States and Canada.

In my initial investigation of how technological platforms, such as Netflix, shape the transmission of the novel’s content and its restrictions, I looked for secondary sources that brought attention to the discussion of Jay Asher’s book in light of the release of Netflix’s *13 Reasons Why* in schools. This took on the form of searching for online news articles dated after the release of the show using a search engine. Using simple keyword searches (such as “*13 Reasons Why* ban or censorship”) was sufficient for my preliminary research because the online news articles I featured in my digital exhibit were meant to be easily searchable and accessible. Also, since my project aimed to tell the story of a censored book and produce new (but specific) knowledge, I did not look at how my project fits within a greater discussion of how technological platforms shape the transmission of a novel’s content and its restrictions. This meant that I did not search scholarly articles using subject-specific terminology.
My preliminary research heavily shaped my research topic. The news articles I collected for my digital exhibit focused on censorship (that is, challenges and bans) in Canada and the United States. Consequently, I narrowed the coverage of my article gathering in Canada and the United States, which gave me room to flesh out the stories of the bans. This involved refining my search terms to include geography. I was also able to include messages sent out families discussing the book in light of the Netflix series, which were made available on some school districts’ online news boards.

My initial criterion for evaluating the authority and quality of sources was whether they came from respectable news outlets. The “respectability” of an outlet was self-determined. When I gathered primary research on my topic (this is to be discussed shortly), I realized that my initial criterion was somewhat ineffective because many important details surrounding the case were omitted in news reports for brevity. However, these articles were included in my final project as every article offered an interpretation of the events it covered.

One of the articles that I came across in my research discussed the three-hour ban of Asher’s book in a Colorado school district. On April 28, 2017, Leigh Grasso, the curriculum director of Mesa County Valley School District 51 in Grand Junction, Colorado emailed school librarians an order to pull the book from circulation. This order came in the wake of recent teen suicides in Grand Junction. The decision to withdraw the book from circulation was reversed hours later after librarians pointed out that the book is different from the TV series.

After reading this story, I decided to feature this digital-born artefact in my Omeka exhibit. I had originally planned to use screenshots of news articles to tell this story, but I realized that news articles would not capture the quick pace of events.
Continuing my online search, I modified my searches in hopes to come across news articles which included the email correspondence. This approach was not successful as I continued to find articles that briefly mention the email correspondence as a result of interviewing Leigh Grasso. After meeting with my instructor, Professor Alexandra Bolintineanu, I was inspired to research laws in the United States, specifically the state of Colorado, which would grant me access to public school records. This new search led me to contact the Colorado Secretary of State. The office helped set up communication with Emily Shockley, the Communications Director of Mesa County Valley School District 51. With Emily Shockley’s consultation, I was able to legally request the email thread through the Colorado Open Records Act. Using this email thread, I made a Neatline project (a plugin for the Omeka content management system) on the series of events that occurred between Friday, April 28, 2017 and Monday, May 1, 2017 in regard to the temporary censorship of Jay Asher’s *Thirteen Reasons Why*. In the news, this story seemed very clean cut. The whole thread of emails reflects the messiness behind the scenes—the person who decided to pull the book from circulation, Leigh Grasso, had not planned it in advance.

My final project features primary and secondary sources which present different cases of censorship. Not only does this decision give the viewers the opportunity to look at censorship, the mix of sources reminds us how stories are truly shaped by the storytellers. I hope that in uncovering the primary resource and discussing this process, I have inspired viewers to do the same to produce new knowledge or re-evaluate existing sources in their own work.

To conclude, this information-seeking process has helped me better understand my role in society as a Digital Humanities student— to use digital tools to make information accessible to the public in a way that challenges the media’s interpretations of events.