Research is a jungle. A hunter and gatherer state that that requires patience, a good sense of direction and a basic set of research ‘survival’ skills to navigate the dense thicket of facts, databases, and literary sources. I began my research expedition in September looking at U.S. economic and diplomatic interests as a cause for the Dominican Intervention in 1965. I got horribly lost, and ended up in New Left territory investigating perceptions of Latin America within the larger context of the Cold War. The reason for the change was numerous discussions with the head of my Historiography and Research Methods Class, Dr. Farber and also librarian David Murray that ended with the realization that the majority of the sources I needed were located in the Dominican Republic or Texas; outside the realm that I was willing to travel in the research jungle.

However, I had already done a significant amount of background reading on interpretations of the Dominican Intervention in various press sources that I had pulled from ProQuest. I had noticed that there seemed to be a minimal amount of critical analysis in the mainstream press about the intervention, in stark contrast to the strong reaction from new organizations that were founded in 1965 or 1966 in direct relation to this event. The North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) was one of these groups. Doing basic Google search engine search I found their website and investigated what they were all about and from there my expedition took off.

I began with gathering all the resources immediately within reach. Using Diamond Catalog as my map, I discovered the Contemporary Culture Collection and I started looking through NACLA’s magazine in order to find out more about it. Unfortunately, this resource
wasn’t enough to sustain my search because the collection only contained physical copies from 1969 on. So I had to go on the hunt.

I plugged into my research survival instincts and turned to WorldCat, because of its larger catalog size. I tried the normal Boolean operators and then some subject field limiters until finally some of the underbrush cleared and I found that Temple had access to the online NACLA Digital Archive as a part of the OpinionArchive database. Not only did it contain the original newsletter from 1967 but also some oral histories from the founders and retrospectives. While these proved the points I was looking to prove, the documents were retrospective, not from the founding time period. So using them to reconstruct motivations was useful, but I needed more to sustain my thesis.

So I went rummaging again through the forest of information this time through the secondary sources to find names of important actors in the organization. I turned back to WorldCat and using the names I was able to find the Margaret Flory Collection at Yale Divinity School. Over winter break I adventured out to New Haven and collected over 150 primary sourced documents. Added to the NACLA Digital Archive, the Proquest Newspaper sources I had found through the database page, and miscellaneous documents I had assembled from Worldcat, Diamond and Google Boolean searches I had finally collected enough to begin clearing away the overgrowth.

My secondary sources were already mostly gathered at this point from using the Library of Congress’ subject guide groupings on the Diamond Catalog. There were no books I could find that were directly on NACLA or American perceptions of Latin America during the Cold War (that weren’t about Cuba) because it is an subject relatively untouched still by scholars. So I had to leaf through a lot of material that was interrelated but not necessarily allied with my subject
directly. Using JSTOR’s database I balanced the scholarly judgment of a book from reviews with the relevance to my subject area. I used the prevalence of a citation in other related works to find the most significant and pertinent sources to contextually back up my arguments.

Through all of this, the jungle of details thinned and a thesis emerged. This paper argues that the Dominican intervention in 1965 provoked New Left liberals into forming new left-wing educational think-tanks, like NACLA that would seek to educate the public through critical review of United States policies in Latin America. Through this dissemination of information, NACLA and other organizations functioned as sources and architects of public opinion, raising public consciousness and inspiring an entire new generation of Leftist thinkers, fracturing the earlier Cold War consensus of the early 1960s and 1950s.