



### **Meet Sarah, the student**

Sarah is a 24 year old MA student who is taking distance education at a Norwegian university. She is born in Norway to migrant parents. She is the first one in her family taking postgraduate studies. She also works part-time for an export company.

She is now in the first term of her MA studies, and has to submit her MA research statement in one month's time. She has previously passed all her university exams and assignments with flying colours. However, she feels anxious about getting started on her research statement. She feels that she does not know what to focus on in her MA dissertation. She is very interested in social conditions and integration issues regarding her ethnic minority community in Norway. She is actively involved in politics. She would like to write about equal opportunities in the Scandinavian countries. She thinks that she can obtain a lot of interesting data for her thesis from her own community. Maybe she could use interviews. In that case, she will have to consider a number of ethical issues in her data collection. There is bound to be confidential information in it.

Sarah does not really know where to begin. She definitely needs to do a lot of reading. Google or the library could be good places to start, but at the same time, she fears drowning in information. On the other hand, it is difficult for her to find the time to visit the library physically. Talking to her supervisor might help too, but she feels too confused at this point. She does not want to sound like a fool or waste her limited supervision time.

She feels that time is running out. Last time she was on campus for a seminar, all her classmates seemed to have very clear thoughts about their research topics and working plans. She feels a bit depressed.

After much pondering, she decides to go to the library, hoping to find some books that will get her onto the right track.

**Discuss the attitudes, assumptions and expectations this case portrays in terms of the student's research process.**



### **Meet Matilda, the librarian**

Matilda is a senior academic librarian. She has been working at a Norwegian university library for the last twenty years. She has been very involved in library instruction. At the reference desk, she likes helping students use the library catalogue and locate the books they need on the countless floors of the library.

She is working late today and the library is quiet. A student comes up to the reference desk and asks her to help her find literature. Matilda does her best to find out what the student wants to write about, but she only seems to obtain vague answers from her. It looks like the student is interested in equal opportunities and ethnic minorities, but in Matilda's opinion, the student is nowhere near a preliminary research question. She is a typical case of confused MA student trying to write her research statement.

Matilda conducts a search in the library catalogue which gives around eight hundred hits. The student looks increasingly stressed, and Matilda does not want her to drown in a sea of references. She thus tells the student to forget about the piles of sources in the library at this point. She advises her to think about her topic a bit more and to come back to the library, once she has managed to narrow her topic down.

Discuss the attitudes, assumptions and expectations this case portrays in terms of the librarian's role in the student's research process.