

How to be a better researcher



Why not Google everything you need?

- Dihydrogen Monoxide
- Genochoice
- Save the Tree Octopus
- RYT Hospital
- The Ova Prima Foundation

And for others, see this website

Different Kinds of Resources

- ❖ Books
- ❖ DVD's
- ❖ Magazines
- ❖ Academic Journals
- ❖ Newspapers
- ❖ Web Sites

Magazines or journals...

what's the difference?

- Magazines

- ❖ Written for the general public
- ❖ Contain a wide variety of articles written by reporters or freelance writers
- ❖ May be opinionated or balanced and generally only reviewed by editors

- ❖Academic Journals

- ❖ Sometimes called refereed, peer-reviewed or scholarly journals
- ❖ Often highly technical
- ❖ Written by professionals or researchers in a certain field
- ❖ Generally contain original research, literature reviews or other articles within a certain discipline

What is a primary source?

- An original document, creative work or artifact created during the time of study.
- They include accounts of an event written by someone who witnessed the event.
- Examples include:
 - Diaries
 - Newspaper articles
 - Original literary works
 - Journals reporting research results

What is a secondary source?

- A secondary source interprets, evaluates or draws conclusions based on a primary source.
- Examples include:
 - Textbooks
 - Magazine articles
 - Critiques
 - Commentaries
 - Journal articles reviewing or interpreting previous findings

What types of information is best found in newspaper articles?

- ❖ Business and Economic news
- ❖ Information about the government, laws, elections, politicians
- ❖ Local news

What about web sites?

Know your source. Consider:

- ❖ Who is the **author**?
- ❖ What is the **purpose** of the web site?
 - ❖ Is the information likely to be biased?
 - ❖ Is it trying to sell you something?
 - ❖ Is the page a satire, parody or spoof? (See [The Onion](#))
- ❖ Is the **content** current and verifiable?
- ❖ Is the **design** easy to read and navigate and spelling and grammar correct?

For more, information watch this [video](#)

How do I find out more?

- ❖ Check various sources. Can you find the same information in more than one source?
- ❖ Research different web sites, such as:
 - ❖ Snopes.com
 - ❖ Urbanlegends.about.com
 - ❖ www.scambusters.org
 - ❖ www.fraud.org

Why do I have to do research?

- ❖ To become a better student
- ❖ To become a more knowledgeable consumer
- ❖ To empower yourself with knowledge
- ❖ To make life easier and save yourself some time
- ❖ To build on others' experiences and knowledge

Why do I have to cite sources?

- ❖ Allows readers to consult the original sources
- ❖ Helps to build knowledge and scholarship over time
- ❖ Allows you to avoid plagiarism, and give credit where it is due

How do I get started?

- ❖ Get a little background knowledge about your subject
- ❖ Figure out what kinds of sources you want to consult
 - ❖ Books
 - ❖ Articles
 - ❖ Websites

What is a search engine?

A search engine is a “tool for finding information, especially on the Internet or World Wide Web. Search engines are essentially massive databases that cover wide swaths of the Internet. Most consist of three parts: at least one program, called a spider, crawler, or bot, which ‘crawls’ through the Internet gathering information; a database, which stores the gathered information; and a search tool, with which users search through the database by typing in keywords describing the information desired (usually at a Web site dedicated to the search engine).”

From:

"search engine." *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009. *Credo Reference*. Web. 25 October 2010.

How to better use search engines

❖ Phrase searching using quotation marks

- ❖ Retrieves the exact phrase within the quotation marks
 - ❖ For example: "A Long Day's Journey Into Night"

❖ Boolean operators

- ❖ AND retrieves documents containing both terms
 - ❖ Zinc AND colds
- ❖ OR retrieves documents containing either term
 - ❖ teenagers OR adolescents OR children
- ❖ NOT excludes documents containing the specified term
 - ❖ Harriet Tubman NOT juvenile

❖ Truncation and Wildcard symbols

- ❖ * shortens a word to retrieve all roots of a word
 - ❖ Teen* will retrieve teenager, teens, and teen
- ❖ ? Stands in for a single character
 - ❖ Wom?n will retrieve any documents containing either *woman* or *women*

❖ Using parentheses

- ❖ Combines terms together
 - ❖ (children or adolescents) and discipline

Check help files in databases or search engines for which symbols to use.

Searching Using Subject Headings

- ❖ Library catalogs and many databases assign subject headings to every entry.
- ❖ Subject headings describe the **content** of the item using a controlled vocabulary of subject terms.
- ❖ This allows the researcher to identify items of relevance without having to think of every possible keyword or synonym.



Watch:

Web Search Strategies in
Plain English



What else do I need to do
to research effectively?

- Be Flexible
 - Try different search terms, and different databases if necessary.
- Be Observant
 - What search features are available to you?
 - What search terms and words do you see in articles that are close to what you're looking for?
- Get Informed
 - Find out a little about your topic from sources like:
Wikipedia
CredoReference
- Take Your Time
 - Good research takes time. Plan accordingly.
- Be willing to ask for help!

Happy researching!

