DOING LIBRARY RESEARCH

PLAN YOUR SEARCH

What kind of information do I want?
- Do I need a general overview of a topic first to get me started?
- Am I looking for very specific information to support arguments in an essay?
- Do I need up-to-the-minute research? Historical information?

Where will I find it?
- If I need **journal articles**, I will look in a **database** instead of the library catalogue
- If I need an **overview**, I might look at reliable **websites**, or look for **encyclopedias** in the **Reference Collection**
- If I need **books**, government documents, music, or videos, I will look in the **library catalogue**

How will I search?
- Think about my topic in a broad “bigger picture”
- Think about my topic broken down into **smaller parts**
- **Brainstorm** for different words I can use to describe my topic
- Think about how to **combine** these words to get more specific or more general information
- Look for **subject headings** so that I can use the same words that the catalogue or database uses

SEARCHING TIPS: LIBRARY CATALOGUE

What can I find in the Library Catalogue?
- Use the library catalogue to find books, videos, music, maps, government information, and more
- Does **NOT** include journal articles

Ways to Search
**Keyword**: searches the catalogue in your own words
  - pro: easy to do!  
  - con: will find a lot of unrelated things + won’t find things that use different words

**Subject**: looks for words the catalogue uses to describe your topic
  - pro: use these words for a more accurate search!  
  - con: first you need to find terms that match your topic

**Advanced Keyword**: lets you limit to certain kinds of material, combine words, limit by year, etc.
  - pro: you can be really specific about what you want  
  - con: using too many limits will get very few results

SEARCHING TIPS: INDEXES/DATABASES

What can I find in Indexes/Databases?
- Articles, dissertations, conference proceedings, news coverage, etc...
- Often contain scholarly articles written by academics, many peer reviewed by experts
- Current information & research, more coverage of specialized topics
- Might find full-text articles OR abstracts + references to find the article somewhere else
**SEARCHING TIPS: INDEXES/DATABASES (CONTINUED)**

How do I get into the Indexes/Databases?
- Click on the *Databases by Subject* or *Databases by Title* tab from the library’s home page

Ways to Search
- Similar to the library catalogue – search for keyword, author, title, subject, year, etc. Look around for different ways to limit your search
- *“Subject Headings”* may appear as links you can click to find more, OR they might be listed in a *thesaurus*
- Remember you can *mark items* to create a list and you can print out fulltext articles or *email them* to yourself

**SEARCHING TIPS: WEBSITES**

Where could I find good quality websites?
- Here are some places to try:
  - [http://www.ipl.org](http://www.ipl.org) – Internet Public Library Directory
  - [http://lii.org/](http://lii.org/) - Librarian’s Index to the Internet
- Check the URL or address of the site – does it contain anything you recognize as being “safe”? (e.g. .edu = educational institution; .gov = government; .org = non-profit organization; etc.)

**EVALUATING INFORMATION: LOOKING OUT FOR CRAAP**

Currency: the timeliness of the information
- When was it published or posted? (e.g. does website give date of last update?)
- Is the information current? (e.g. Has the information been disproved since this source was published?)

Relevance: does the information meet your needs?
- How does this source contribute to your knowledge of the topic? (e.g. support your thesis, or particular sub-argument? Offer a counter point?)
- Is it written at an appropriate level? (e.g. is the material written for scholars/researchers? General public? High school students?)

Authority: can you trust the source?
- Who is the author or publisher?
- What credentials does the author have?

Accuracy: is the information reliable, truthful, and correct?
- Does the author show where the information came from?
- Is the site free of obvious errors like spelling mistakes and links not working?

Purpose: why was it written?
- What is this information out there for? (to inform? Entertain? Sell you something?)
- Is there an obvious bias in the author’s writing? (e.g. strongly pushes one side or political agenda?)

Do I TRUST it?
- Be sceptical! Don’t assume that just because you read something that means that it is true.
- Check the source and see what you can find out.

**NEED HELP?**

The Library is here to assist you!
- Information & Research Assistance (desk by Library entrance): 329-2263
- “Ask Us” Online: E-mail, Instant Messaging/Chat


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