General Research Tip Sheet

Research tip #1: Beginning your research

✓ Think about your topic and try to identify main concepts to help focus your research.

✓ Start identifying informational resources as early as possible by thinking of the types of resources needed. Resources can include:

- General sources (books, textbooks, and encyclopedias).
- Scholarly journals, magazines, or newspapers (also known as periodicals).
- Web resources.
- Also think about the format of the source. Is it available in print? Is it available electronically?

✓ Use the library catalog to locate materials available to you at SBU or check the availability of periodicals by using the electronic journal locator located on the library homepage. http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/

Research tip #2: Using databases

✓ Try to choose a database that is appropriate for researching your topic. If you are unsure of your topic, a multidisciplinary database is a great place to start in order to view some of the literature available on your subject.

- Multidisciplinary databases include: Academic Search Premier, ProQuest Research Library, or JSTOR.
- Subject specific databases include: PsycArticles, ERIC, or ATLA Religion database.
- Many databases include tools such as subject directories, topic guides, and the ability to rank search results to help you in your research process.

✓ Remember to use more than one database. All databases do not always cover or index the same material. What is not accessible in one database can possibly be retrieved in another. Explore the resources and see what other materials are available.
Research tip #3: Hints for searching the databases

When searching databases try to:

✓ Clearly define your topic, making sure it is not too narrow or too broad.

✓ Use quotes to keep terms or phrases together:
  - Example: “Hurricane Katrina”

✓ Use the asterisk as a wildcard:
  - Example: Using the asterisk in woman (wom*n) finds the terms woman, women

✓ Use AND, OR and NOT when needed (Be aware that using NOT may eliminate pertinent results. Stop in, call, or email and ask us if you are not sure).
  - Example: terror* and (biological or chemical)

✓ Think of synonyms for your topic. Databases index information using different subject terms or keywords as well as terms and keywords that are supplied by the author/researcher. Having synonyms and identifying main concepts can make your search more effective.

Research tip #4: Can’t access what you need? Try ILL

✓ ILL stands for Interlibrary Loan and is a service provided to you through the library that allows access to materials the library does not own or subscribe to. Check out the ILL webpage http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/ill.htm or stop by and fill out a request form.

✓ Make sure to have as much information about the source as possible (name of source, author, publication date, page numbers, title, etc).

✓ Keep in mind that materials take at least one week to arrive…so start your research early!!!

Citing Your Work: Noodletools

✓ Noodletools is the citation manager at SBU and it supports MLA, APA, and Chicago/Turabian citation styles. Citation manuals are also available for use.

✓ Create your own log-in and have access to a variety of resources including personalized folders, note cards to help you keep track of quotations used, your ideas and questions about sources, hints on how to cite a source in text, and more.

Good luck with your research and remember we are here to help!

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