

## Special Tips Related to Library Research for USI Distance Education Students

This document includes six separate tips which will be worth knowing about if you are a distance education student attempting to do university-level study and library research at the University of Southern Indiana.

### Tip #1: Rice Library's DLS Web Pages

The first tip is using Rice Library's Distance Learning Services Web page. To access this page from the library's home page, click on [Distance Learning Services](#). Here, collected into one place, you will find many useful resources and services to support your study and research, including links to the library's catalog, electronic databases, e-mail reference, public and academic libraries in Indiana, state-funded database collections, as well as helpful information for visiting the USI campus. If you have not already added this page or the [library's main Web page](#) to your list of favorites, please do so for quick access to a world of information.



### Tip #2: Contact Information

A second tip is using contact information. Listed on the [Distance Learning Services](#) Web page is contact information for the Distance Learning Librarian, including postal and e-mail addresses as well as telephone, toll-free telephone, and fax numbers. Also located on this page, is contact information for the university's [Distance Education Office](#). Finally, on nearly all of the library's Web pages, is a **Contact Us** link which lists multiple ways to contact Rice Library, depending on your question. The link will be in the sidebar menu along the left hand side of the page with the words [Contact Us](#). Always feel free to contact Rice Library if you need to, especially if the online helps that have been provided leave you with unanswered questions.

### Tip #3: Instructional Services

A third tip is using instructional services. Being a distance education student, you may feel like you are at a disadvantage when it comes to making use of Rice Library's instructional services. However, the library provides several helpful online resources of an instructional nature. Some of these include the subject, research, and citation guides that are accessible through the [Research Guides](#) link available on the library's home page. This page will also provide a link to an ever-growing number of online tutorials which may assist you in such things as locating journals at USI, accessing electronic reserves, citing electronic sources, and using online databases. Another helpful link on the library's Web page is labeled [Recommended Web Sites](#). This link is available from the library's home page under the **E-Resources** drop-down menu, located along the page's masthead. Once on the page you can search the collection of quality Internet resources using one of three search engines devoted to web sites, online media, or podcasts.

You will also want to be aware of and make use of the help available on the library's [Databases](#) page. First of all, be sure to make use of the discipline groupings on this page, selecting the one most appropriate for your research. These lists attempt to group together all of the databases by a subject area, thus simplifying a user's decision regarding which databases are appropriate for specific research.

Finally, be aware that nearly all of the electronic databases, including the library's [Catalog](#), have help screens. Usually these can be accessed through tabs or buttons located along the top of the database's web page. Information about the database, how to structure and refine a search, as well as interpret and make use of search results are often discussed in these sections. Referring to these screens will help you make the best use of the features of any database.

#### Tip #4: Evaluating and Using Different Types of Resources

A fourth tip for distance education students is learning how to recognize, evaluate, and use different types of resources. It is important that you be able to distinguish between popular and scholarly publications. The page entitled [Scholarly vs Popular Periodicals](#) will equip you with some practical information on how to do this. It is also important that you learn to evaluate print and non-print resources for such qualities as accuracy, currency, and relevance. The research guide entitled [“Evaluating Web Resources \(TACO\)”](#) will give you a solid background for doing this. Finally, be aware that different types of sources that cover the same topic may provide you with different types of information. A reference book, such as an encyclopedia, may give you an overview or background information to a topic. It may also supply you with a brief bibliography for further research. Trade books, on the other hand, may cover a subject more thoroughly or give greater detail to a certain aspect of a subject. Journals and magazines may provide the most current information on a topic, but they also can be more focused on a particular aspect of a larger topic. Keeping these differences in mind as you use various types of resources may help you seek and use the most appropriate source in a given research situation.



#### Tip #5: Using Public and Academic Libraries



A fifth tip has to do with taking advantage of academic and public libraries in your geographic area. If you live near a large state university, you may from time to time be able to use its library resources to fulfill your information needs. Smaller private colleges in your area may also have resources that you will find useful, particularly if the institution offers a program in your major area of study. It's always a good idea to make contact with such libraries in advance of visiting the campus. When you do, ask them basic questions about their rules for non-students using their resources, their service hours, and their locations.

Your local public library may also be able to assist you with your information needs. However, please bear in mind that a public library serves a different clientele than an academic library, and unless it is a large metropolitan library, it is unlikely that it will have the specialized books, reference books, journals, and databases that you will need to complete university-level study and research. The public library, however, may be able to assist you through its interlibrary loan services.

For a fuller discussion of [Interlibrary Loan Services](#) and [document delivery options](#), read the sections devoted to each of these services available on the library's web pages.

#### Tip #6: A Proper Place for the Web

The sixth and final tip involves your use of the Internet. Being a distance education student, you may not have an academic library close by, and, as mentioned above, a small community's public library is not likely to have the specialized resources you will need to do university-level research. In such circumstances, you may find it easy to turn to the Internet or World Wide Web to meet most of your information needs. However, it is wise in most instances not to make the Internet your only, or even your first, resource for information. Rather, take advantage of the many quality online resources provided by the library. Although the Internet is often a good source for information, its resources must be carefully evaluated. For some simple guidelines for evaluating Internet Web sites refer to the research guide entitled [“Evaluating Web Resources \(TACO\)”](#) mentioned above.

