


How to Research a Topic

HOW and WHERE TO START

Reference librarians are available to assist you. Stop by the reference desk or email at libref@usi.edu.
Call us: 812-464-1907; 1-800-246-6173.

Where to start: 6 basic steps

1. Formulate a topic then conduct exploratory research (spend maybe 20 minutes getting a feel for your topic: Dates, major events, major players, major issues, etc.)

Start with looking at a few REFERENCE books for background information. Ask for assistance at the library's Reference Desk or use one of the Subject Guides. See listing: 
2. Check to see if we have a Subject Guide related to your topic. These guides can help you to quickly find reference sources, determine which databases would be best to search given your topic, and they include a list of recommended web sites. Over 150 Subject Guides are posted on the library's homepage under [Research Guides](#) and many are also available in print in the library.
3. Search the library's catalog for a few BOOKS (Remember that books have chapters, sometimes shorter than articles. They also often have bibliographies that may lead you to other sources.)
4. Search a few databases for ARTICLES
How to choose a database:
 1. Select **Databases** from Library's Home Page <http://www.usi.edu/library/index.asp>
 2. Select your area of study
 3. Select an individual database in your topic's subject area or multidisciplinary ones like Academic Search Premier
5. Determine if there is too much or not enough information on your topic. Call, email, or stop by the Reference Desk for ideas on how to revise your search terms and narrow or broaden your search results.
6. **ASK QUESTIONS:**
Give us 5 minutes
and we can potentially save you a lot of time.

The library's catalog and the databases take some getting used to. A little instruction can go a long way. The reference librarians can give you a head start in just 5 minutes.

Sharp students ask questions

Contact Us:

- By phone: 812-464-1907; Toll-Free: 1-800-246-6173
- By e-mail: libref@usi.edu
- Stop by the Rice Library reference desk to consult with a reference librarian.

Selected listing of Subject Guides

Guides are posted on the library's home page under [Research Guides](#). Print copies of many are available in the library.

ART, MUSIC, THEATER

Ancient Art
Cathedrals
Graphic Arts
Medieval Art
Modern Art
Music
Theatre/Drama/Musicals
Theatre/Staging

BUSINESS and MARKETING

Advertising
Business (General)
Careers (ASBE 231)
Finance
International Business
Marketing

COMMUNICATIONS

Controversial issues (CMST 101)
Film, Television & Radio
Interpersonal Communication
Journalism
Mass Communication
Public Relations

CURRENT TOPICS

Bioethics
Controversial Issues
Globalism
The Middle East
Sports
Terrorism

DIVERSITY

African American Studies
Cultural Studies
Gay/Lesbian Studies
Gender Studies
Human Sexuality
People with Disabilities

EDUCATION, PHYS ED and SOCIAL WORK

Children's Literature
Early Childhood Education
K-12 Education
Multicultural Education
Philosophies of Education
Reflective Teaching
Exercise Science
Physical Education
Social Work

HISTORY

American History since 1865
American History to 1865
Crusades
Historical Methods (HIST 298)
The Holocaust
Indiana History
Latin America
Medieval History (500-1300)
Vietnam War
World War, 1914-1918
World War, 1939-1945

HUMANITIES

Alchemy and Magic
Ethics
Folklore
Iliad and Odyssey
Philosophy
Religion
World Mythology

LITERATURE and LANGUAGES

Chaucer
Canadian Literature
Shakespeare
Travel Writing
Women in Literature

MILITARY SCIENCE

Military Science
Peace Studies

NURSING & HEALTH

Dental Hygiene/Assisting
Gerontology
Nursing
Nutrition
Occupational Therapy
Radiologic Technology
Respiratory Therapy

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Biology
Chemistry
Engineering
Environmental Science
Geology
Global Warming

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Anthropology/Archaeology
Criminal Justice
Psychology
Sociology
Women's Studies

Recommended databases to start with:

- Academic Search Premier (multi-disciplinary)
- ProQuest Research Library (multi-disciplinary)

Select databases from the list of databases at the URL address below.

<http://www.usi.edu/library/dbases2/DLRLibraryDatabases.htm>

A few tips for searching databases:

- Experiment with different search terms. Use all three search boxes. Try breaking your topic sentence down into a few keywords or phrases.
- Use an * to truncate your searches. For example school * will search for: school, schools, and schooling.
- In the library's catalog, for truncation use a ? instead of an asterisk.
- Do not always limit by full-text in the databases. The article you want may be in one of the other 60+ library databases.

If an article is not full-text, click the Check for Availability link to see if we have it full-text in another database or if we own it in print or on microfiche/microfilm.

If we do not own the journal article electronically or in print, you can request the article for free through Interlibrary Loan at: <http://www.usi.edu/library/illdd.asp>

How to access USI Rice Library's databases (primarily for finding articles) and other online resources from off-campus

Go to the library's homepage at:
<http://www.usi.edu/library/index.asp>

- Select **Databases**
- Select **Databases A to Z**
- Click on name of database you want to search
- The **Database Login** page will appear
- Enter your **MyUSI username** and **password**
- Click **Login**

Finished with your paper? Now you need to cite your sources

What format should you use?

Generally speaking:

- For English and the Humanities use MLA style.
- For Psychology, Business, Education, and Health use APA style.
- For History, use Chicago style.

If you are not sure what format to use, ask your professor how they want you to cite your sources, i.e., create your bibliography.

Guides to citing sources:

2-page simplified "cheat-sheets" on how to cite your sources in MLA, APA, or Chicago are posted on the Library's home page under [Research Guides](#) and are also available in print in the library.

Additional sources for details on how to cite sources:

American Medical Association manual of style
REF R119 .A533

The Chicago manual of style
REF Z253 .U69

MLA handbook for writers of research papers
REF LB2369 .G53

Also 2 copies on Reserve. Ask at the Checkout Counter

Have research questions Contact us:

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