

# **Methods of Writing Research Papers**

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**Lecture Seven**

## **Using Library Resources**

The library should be the center of your research, whether you access it electronically or visit in person. This topic launches your research through scholarly publications:

- a) Accessing library sources to launch the search
- b) Developing a working bibliography
- c) Finding credible sources on your topic
- d) Utilizing indexes for topic development

As the repository of the best books and periodicals, the articles that you access through the library are, in the main, written by scholars and published in journals and books only after careful review by a board of like-minded scholars. Logged in at the library, you can download articles to your computer, print files, or read books online.

### **Launching the Search**

Your research strategy in the library should include four steps, with adjustments for your individual needs.

1. Conduct a preliminary search for relevant sources. Scan the reference section of your library for its electronic sources as well as the abundance of printed indexes, abstracts, bibliographies,

and reference books. Search the library's electronic book catalog and dip into the electronic databases, such as Academic Search Premier or InfoTrac. This preliminary work will serve several purposes:

- a) It shows the availability of source materials with diverse opinions.
- b) It provides a beginning set of reference citations, abstracts, and full-text articles.
- c) It defines and restricts your subject while providing an overview of the subject.

2. Refine the topic and evaluate the sources. As soon as you refine the topic, you can spend valuable time reading abstracts, articles, and pertinent sections of books. Most instructors will expect you to reference and cite from scholarly sources, so a mix of journal articles and books should accompany your online articles or field research.
3. Take shortcuts. First, consult the Appendix of this book, "Finding Reference Works for Your General Topic", which lists appropriate electronic and printed sources. It sends you to key sources in historical, social, scientific, and philosophical disciplines. In addition, you will need to access a variety of computer sources in the library, such as the electronic book catalog and the electronic services like InfoTrac. From the computer workstation in the library, you can develop a working bibliography, read abstracts and full-text articles, and, in general, make substantive advances in researching your topic.
4. Read and take notes. Examine books, articles, essays, reviews, computer printouts, and government documents. Whenever

possible, create notes as you read so you can transcribe them or paste them into your text.

5. Consult with a librarian. If your topic does not initially generate a number of sources, confer with a librarian. A reference librarian may suggest more appropriate words or phrases for the subject; this can be a critical step when you feel that you might be stuck.