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Choosing Your Research Topic Or Question

- Select an appropriate topic for research-something that interests you!
- Generate questions from a topic.
- Identify key concepts and vocabularies related to a topic.
- Narrow (too much information found) or broaden (not enough information found) your research topic or question if necessary.
For additional information on starting and completing your project go to:

✓ Purdue Online Writing Center

For planning the project and meeting time deadlines, look at:

✓ Research Project Calculator

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Research Resources and Tips

• The LRTC (College Library) Web Page
  - Catalogs
  - Research Databases
  - Recommended Web Resources
  - Student Tools

• Google Searches

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Catalogs of Libraries Available on the LRTC Website

- **MnPALS Plus** An open-source "discovery tool" expanding the search and information features of MnPALS.

- **MnLINK** Provides access to the collection resources of all types of libraries in the state.

- **MnCAT** For searches of the collections at the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities Campuses.
Catalogs continued

- **East Central Regional Library** For persons living in Pine, Aitkin, Mille Lacs, Kanabec, Chisago and Isanti counties, this is a good supplemental collection to search especially for general research topics, such as environmental, ethical or social issues. Get a ECRL borrower’s card for check-out of materials.

- **E Books (EBSCO)** Search for information in this electronic book collection.

- **First Search/World Cat** The world's largest union catalog. Can’t locate a special title in other catalogs? Try this one to expand the search horizon.
Using the Library's Research Databases

To search scholarly journals and popular magazines, newspapers, and an online encyclopedia, click on an icon.

Pals Connect Linker

A tool that connects users to full-text journal articles as various databases are searched.
Mobile Access to EBSCOhost Databases

Designed to work with most mobile devices that can access the internet such as the following.

BlackBerry, Dell Axiom, iPhone, Palm 750
See here for setup information provided by EBSCO host.
Database Searching Tips

– Basic Search - By keyword to retrieve more information with less precision.
– Use Truncation - Add * or ? at the end of a partial search keyword, to search the word with different endings, example: comput* will retrieve computer, computers, computing, computation, etc.
– Advanced Searching - Search by adding limiters, or use Boolean connectors- AND/OR to narrow or broaden your results. Use truncation and Boolean together.
– Select the Full Text Box - To get immediate results from your search.
Help is Available

• Tutorials are available in all the databases. See the support link at the bottom of each website.

• Click the help icons to see various searching techniques explained.

• Click here to get a pocket guide from the Cinahl Plus with Full Text database.
Types of Resources

- **Popular Magazines** - Articles about current events and popular culture, opinion pieces, fiction, self-help tips.

- **Scholarly Journals** - Articles presenting original research or events related to a specific discipline.

- Click [here](#) for the difference between Academic Journals and Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals.
Types of Resources, continued

– **Primary Sources** are original, un-interpreted information whereas
– **Secondary Sources** interpret, analyze or summarize.
– NOTE: Wikipedia can be a helpful information resource, especially when a subject is completely new to the researcher. As with other sources, quality and adequacy of provided information can vary. **Check with your instructor to see if an article from Wikipedia can be used and cited in your research paper or subject.**
Recommended Web Resources

Explore a host of recommended and evaluated web sites. They are excellent resources to start your research and information gathering. Find them under **Internet Resources and Searching** on the LRTC web page.

See the next slide for a few examples.
Virtual Library Sites - Reliable internet resources selected and organized by librarians.

- Virtual Library
- Reference Desk
- Internet Public Library

Subject/Program specific sites
- Law Moose
- Medline Plus
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- National Geographic Green Guide

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Student Tools

On the College Library Web Page, the Student Tools section offers various information resources to assist in the preparation and completion of papers, reports, and resumes.

- Dictionaries
- Guides to Abbreviations and Acronyms
- Copyright Guidelines
- Avoidance of Plagiarism
- Preparation of Citations

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Google Search Options

Try the listed library databases and Internet resources first! These resources remove the need to worry about credibility and appropriateness of located resources.

If more information is needed, move into Google and its various services.

– **Basic Search**

– **Advanced Search**

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Specialized Google Tools:

- **Google Books**: Whenever you do a Google web search here, you're also searching its book index; any relevant hits will appear in your search results, and clicking on a result will take you to the relevant page in the book, where you can browse a few more pages and learn where to borrow or buy it.

- **Google Images**: The most comprehensive image search on the web. This is a good tool for searching for a possible image to add to your report or project.
- **Google Scholar**  Google Scholar provides a way to broadly search for scholarly literature. From one place, you can search across many disciplines and sources: articles, theses, books, abstracts and court opinions, from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities and other web sites. Careful topic definition on the Advanced Search screen will improve results.
Appropriate Resources and Research Ethics

- Reliable Sources
- Citing Sources
- Copyright Guidelines
- Plagiarism
Credibility of Web Sites
Reliable sites will provide contact information and/or an “About Us” section.” Also take note:

- Review the content of the site’s URL address (http://.....). Anything not involving a “gov” or “edu” or state abbreviation will require a closer checking for credibility.

- Determine the site’s author or organization and overall purpose. Are the goals of the site stated and clear?

- What is provided – facts, opinions, information reports from others?
Credibility Criteria

• Evaluate the currency (timeliness) of the Internet page since this will be crucial for many research projects.
• Examine how the information presented compares to other resources being used for the report or project. Review several web pages to assure access to quality and credible Internet information.
• Review the quality of writing, spelling, and organization of the web page.
• Quality standards should match those found in print and electronic journal articles and in books.
See the following links for additional information on evaluating web based resources

• [Anoka Ramsey Info Literacy](#)
• [Evaluating websites](#)
• [St. Cloud State Website on Credibility](#)
Documenting Your Sources

• Citing sources used in preparation of a paper or report are a critical element of the project. The course’s instructor will select the official format for these citations. Here at PTCC, the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) are most commonly used.

• Citing sources may occur in footnotes, bibliographies, and lists of references.

• Information sources can vary greatly and each type requires a defined citation format. Some examples are: website, book chapter, journal article, treaty section, public law chapter, and personal interview.
Creating A Bibliography

Son of Citation Machine

MLA Citation Information

Help from Microsoft Word: Creating a bibliography

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Works Cited vs. Bibliography

• Works Cited is sometimes referred to as References. The terms mean the same thing. Each is an alphabetical list of works cited, or works to which you have made reference. Works Cited is generally used when citing sources using MLA (Modern Language Association) style, while the title References is used when citing sources using APA (American Psychological Association) style.

• Works Cited and Bibliography are not the same. In Works Cited you only list items you have actually cited. In a Bibliography you list all of the material you have consulted in preparing your essay whether or not you have actually cited the work.
• Entries in Works Cited, References, or Bibliography are put in alphabetical order by last names of authors, editors, translators, etc. or by first words of titles.

• See the following print resources in the Pine Technical & Community College Library.
  – MLA handbook for writers of research papers 7th ed., 2009      REF 808 MLA
  – Publication manual of the American Psychological Association , 6th ed., 2009      REF 808.06 PUB
Plagiarism and Copyright

“Plagiarism and violation of copyright are essentially stealing words, ideas, or creative works--intellectual property that rightfully belongs to someone else.”
(From University of Wyoming Tutorial)
• For a PTCC tutorial on plagiarism, click here.

• GPS LifePlan’s avoiding plagiarism link here.

• For University of Minnesota’s copyright information, click here.
Going Elsewhere for Information

Placing an Interlibrary Loan Request
Interlibrary Loan

Minitex’s interlibrary loan service (funded by the State of Minnesota) is a valuable and very well used service, allowing the sharing of resources and information among all types of libraries in the state. Here are some things to remember.

- Each interlibrary loan request does involve expenditure of local library and state funds, so it is important to utilize our available resources before seeking books or other media resources at other libraries or requesting copies of journal articles.
• If you do require additional information for your project or paper, then carefully follow the instructions for the various interlibrary loan processes.

• Most titles or articles needed are supplied within 3 – 5 days from the date of request.

• Some journal articles will be delivered electronically to your email. Watch for the message.

• For assistance with placing an interlibrary loan request, follow the information outlined here.
Tutorial Summary

• Select your research subject carefully and develop a functional approach for information gathering.
• Keep track of good information and resources so that they can be cited appropriately when writing begins. Do not plagiarize other people’s words and ideas in violation of copyright rules.
• The LRTC provides print and electronic guides for preparation of Works Cited and Bibliographies.
• LRTC’s [Library Catalogs](#) page provides access to millions of books and other resources.
• The library’s online research databases are all generally searchable in a similar manner. Explore one and the others will be easier to use. Be sure to make use of the tutorials provided within each database. Your library barcode on the back of your photo ID allows off-campus access to the databases. In some cases, your StarID and password can also be used for authentication.

• More functional database searching and better results occur by choosing to select certain search “limiters” or “definers” on the search screen. Full-Text - Date Limitation – Scholarly Journals are examples.
• Evaluate carefully resources obtained from Internet/Google searches. Is it credible information to be used for the assignment?

• Tap into the statewide Interlibrary Loan Service after review and use of resources and information located in our local collection. Have your barcode number ready for this process.

• Searching for information and discovering new things are primary activities of a person’s college experience and personal life. Become a successful lifelong learner as your life’s journey proceeds.
Resources Used in this Tutorial


Contact Us

– For more information and assistance at any time, contact 320-629-4546.

• Instructors or students requiring a completion/assessment form for this tutorial, click here.

• Library Homepage