

When doing research on a topic, there is a basic system or process which you can use to gather the information you need.

1) Choosing the Topic

- a) Develop a clear idea of what information you are looking for
- b) Determine what type of information you are seeking: current, historical, or both
- c) Requirements of your project (course assignment, publication requirements)

2) Finding Background Information

- a) Gather background information in reference sources (general and specific) which provide a broad overview of the topic
 - i) Important names, dates, events
 - ii) Keywords and terms associated with topic
 - iii) Additional sources from bibliographies

3) Refining the topic

- a) Broaden or limit the topic depending on the amount of information available
- b) Examine specific area or areas of the topic
- c) Searching for information can assist in providing ideas to limit or broaden topic

4) Selecting Resources

- a) Different types of resources may be more appropriate than others
- b) Awareness of what type of information is included in each type of resource
- c) Information timeline

5) Searching for Information

- a) In-depth information
 - i) Online catalog, IUCAT, provides access to books and other library materials by keyword, author, title, and subject
 - ii) Library of Congress Subject Headings are controlled vocabulary used in the online catalog
 - iii) Library of Congress Classification system is used for call numbers in the Indiana University Libraries
- b) Current information
 - i) Most recent information is located in periodicals – newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals
 - ii) To access periodical articles use an index/abstract or database to locate articles
 - iii) Each index/database may have controlled vocabulary specific to that index or database. Use thesaurus, descriptors, or subject indexes when available.

- c) Expanding the search for information to other resources
 - i) Be aware of specialized collections like government publications, primary source materials, maps, vertical files, etc.
 - ii) Resources noted in bibliographies may be available from other Indiana University Libraries and can be requested in the catalog by using the Request Delivery button. Other materials may be available in other libraries through an interlibrary loan system.
 - iii) Internet and the World Wide Web resources

6) Evaluating Resources

- a) Analysis resources
- b) Evaluating Information Sources handout

7) Citing Sources

- a) Documentation – use the required style manual or guide
- b) Plagiarism – Student Code of Ethics

Hints:

Work from general to specific

Document what you find and where – citations

Translate your topic – subject headings, descriptors (thesaurus)

Other guides:

<http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/home.htm>

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill1.htm>

<http://gemini.lib.purdue.edu/core/login/login.cfm>