

DeVry Institute

Library Research Guide

To do effective research, a variety of resources are necessary. For instance, to get all of the information for a research paper from the Internet would be as bad as attempting to get it all from books. Why? Books are often the best resource for thorough background information but are not always up-to-date. Online resources or periodicals are often the most current, but can give very shallow treatment of a topic.

This research model outlines the main resources available in the library. One way to approach the research process is by following these steps in order. Another approach might be to consider this a checklist of useful resources, each one good for something.

Reference Materials

- Include dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, bibliographies, etc. and their online equivalents
- Useful to get the following kinds of information:
 - major ideas
 - long-standing controversies
 - the history of the field
 - definitions for key terms
 - lists of relevant sources
 - identification of key people within the field
 - chronologies
 - statistics
- Use when you know little or nothing about a topic
- Use to get a quick overview of a topic
- Reviewing reference materials first may save you time later

Books

- Use to find thorough treatment of a topic
- Can be found through online catalog
- Available in library, online, and through ILL
- Check the index to find the information you need within a book
- Browsing can be productive (see the back of this sheet)

Periodical (magazine and journal) articles

- Use to get up-to-date information about a topic
- Can be found through library databases, online, or print indexes
- Periodicals available in library in print and online
- Available full-text or through ILL
- Help sheets are available for all databases

Internet

- Useful for all kinds of information, especially government information, pop culture topics, and opinion
- Be aware that much information on the Web has not been verified or reviewed, i.e. it has not passed through the same review process as a book or magazine article

General research pointers

- All information must be attributable to a source (this includes ideas as well as quotes)
- Citation pearl growing
 - Take advantage of the research done in your sources
 - Use indexes, bibliographies, lists of works cited to expand your resources
 - Use subject headings at the top or bottom of materials retrieved online to find more information on the same topic

