



TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR LIBRARY RESEARCH

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- 1. What do you already know about your subject?**
What aspects of this topic interest you? Where would you go to find out more?
- 2. What broad discipline does it fall into? How long has your subject existed or is it a relatively new concept**
Is it History, Engineering, Education, Medicine, Literature, Art, or Sociology?
- 3. Are there other ways to describe your topic? Do some terms have synonyms? How is it related to other topics?**
For example, topics on the environment can be related to biology, chemistry, policy studies, economics, engineering or other topics.
- 4. What kinds of resources might be useful for this paper or project? Did your instructor tell you what types of resources to use?**
 - Newspapers or magazine articles - use to find the popular viewpoint.
 - Journal articles - use to find scholarly articles.
 - Books this includes reference books and handbooks - use to find background on a topic, however they are not as current as journal articles.
 - Government Documents - great for statistical information
- 5. How long do you have to do this paper? How long does it need to be?**

START AT THE LIBRARY'S HOME PAGE <http://www.library.jhu.edu>

JHU Libraries Catalog

This is what the JHU Libraries OWN. We own books; journals, although the catalog is not the place to find individual journal articles; government documents; videos, DVDs; and much more.

Online Resources

This is where to go for journal articles, data sets, or electronic books.

Government Publications/Maps/Law Page

This is where to find laws, regulations, patents, maps, statistical information and more.

Librarians

We're here to help, don't be afraid to ask.

Searching Tips

1. When should you use keywords vs. subject headings?

Keywords - usually provide more sources. Use keywords when you're uncertain about the topic or you want a broad search.

Subject Headings - often use a standardized vocabulary. They are sometimes called descriptors. Searching your term as a subject heading is a good way to narrow the results. Also limit your search terms to the title to narrower search.

2. BOOLEAN LOGIC

Boolean Operators, especially AND/OR allow you to combine words in a way to get the results you want.

AND narrows the search

OR makes the search broader

EVALUATE YOUR RESOURCES - ESPECIALLY INTERNET SITES

Who wrote it and what is the author's affiliation or background?

Who is the intended audience?

What is the scope or coverage of the resource?

Why was it written or published? Is the material objective or biased?

When was it published?

Where was it published? Who is the publisher?

How is the information presented? Is there any supporting material?

How accurate does the information appear?

Citing Your Sources

Different disciplines have different styles for citing sources and listing references. It is your responsibility to find out which style your instructor wants you to use in your paper.

Examples of different styles can be found on the library's web page at

<http://www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/citing/index.html>

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Library research is a process and sometimes the "trial and error" method is necessary.
- Follow leads, browse nearby books, and use references in the material you find.
- Be creative and flexible.
- Library research typically takes longer than you think it will; allow yourself enough time.
- Record what you find for your bibliography or use RefWorks and save yourself time.
- *Ask if you need help - the librarians at JHU are here to help you.*

Have Fun and Good Luck!!