

Tips for Picking Appropriate Academic Research Resources

Conducting effective and substantive research can be a challenge to get a handle on for the first time. While “researching” for personal interest may mean simply typing a term into an internet browser and seeing what might be out there, researching in the academic environment requires a higher level of accuracy and expertise in the resources gathered. Below are some quick tips in determining the appropriateness for your academic research from the five major categories of research sources (Books, Databases, Articles, Reference Books, and Websites).

Books

Books are the most traditional source for academic research. As an excellent source of information and often help place the topic of research in a larger content that can help better understand influences that are important to your research. Be sure to review the book’s table of contents and index to help pinpoint your topic within the book. Not all books are created equal nor intended to serve the same audience, however. Specifically, reference books offer different values and are covered a bit later.

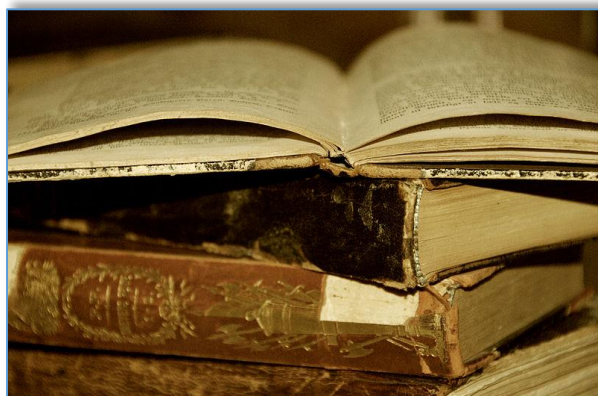


Image Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Timeless_Books.jpg

Databases



Databases typically contain vast collections of scholarly journals, articles, newspapers, and other research materials. We are extremely lucky to have a library that has a vast collection and access to thousands of these resources. As the resources within the databases are developed and catalogued for preservation and dissemination of knowledge, they are great for research! So, be sure to always check them out and ask the librarians for assistance if you have difficulty using them.

Image Source: <http://www.newcitylibrary.org/node?page=8>

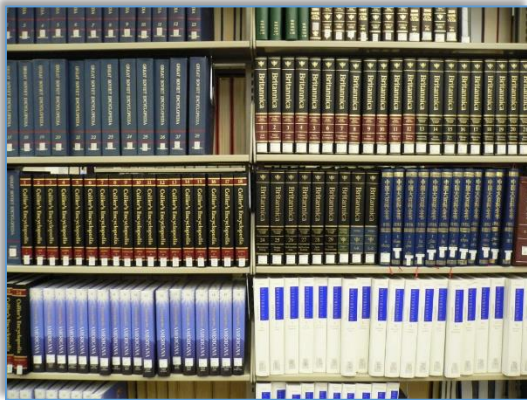
Articles

Articles are great resources for research. Not only do they often cover a much narrower and more specific topic, they also are typically much more current as it can take a long time for a book to move through the process from writing to publication. However, like the differences between books and reference books, not all articles are created equal! One surefire way to ensure you are using academically appropriate articles is to always use articles that come from the academic journals found in the library's databases.



Image Source: <http://www.phd2published.com/2011/09/07/klaus-dodds-publishing-in-academic-journals-part-1/>

Reference Books



Reference books typically provide a highly synthesized overview of a topic and do not contain new research or analysis. While they may help in understanding many topics, they do not provide much more than the “big picture” of each. For more penetrating analysis and perspectives on a given topic, you will need to look toward the other types of resources presented. So, do not overuse these reference books!

Image Source: <http://sites.scranton.edu/library/2009/04/01/reference-books/>

Websites

Websites and the ease of access to the Internet provide us with a vast array of information. However, students should approach using websites for academic research with great caution! Simply put, not all websites found on the Internet are created equally and can be the downfall of many hardworking students. Many websites may contain inaccurate, out-of-date, or biased information. A good rule of thumb, is to simply avoid using websites. Instead, use those resources you would typically find in a library (and presented above). If you do use websites, a great resource for determining the appropriateness of a website is:

[Using the Internet as a Resource for Historical Research and Writing.](#)



Image Source: <http://www.investintech.com/resources/blog/archives/4871-5-creative-ways-search-web.html>

These are just a few of the major resources for making your research successful. For more resources and tips, see the Online Library's [Research Guide](#). Do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions also! Happy Researching!