

Effective Academic Research...?

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Q: What does effective academic research look like?

A: Asking a question;
looking for answers;
being engaged;
producing a contribution;
participating in a community.

Menu

- ASKING A QUESTION
 - Brainstorming and formulating a research question
- LOOKING FOR ANSWERS
 - What do you need?
 - Where to look
 - How to search
 - Research process
 - Search tips
- BEING ENGAGED
 - Evaluating resources
 - Beyond the page
 - Keeping track
- PRODUCING A CONTRIBUTION
 - Troubleshooting
- PARTICIPATING IN A COMMUNITY
 - Ethical use of information

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Have a plan and a timeline! Break down your research and project as much as you can, and use these estimations to let you know whether you're on track to finish on time.

Asking a Question

- **What's the big idea? Your research question should:**
 - ❖ Interest you
 - ❖ Be doable
 - ❖ Give you a chance to show your abilities
 - ❖ Fit into one sentence
- **Strategies & resources:**
 - ❖ Concept mapping (non-linear thinking)
 - ❖ Talk to others
 - ❖ Start a notebook
 - ❖ Look at the literature—be open to change!

Looking for Answers (in the right places)

- **What do you need?**

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- **Types of resources:**
 - ❖ Scholarly (academic journals and books)
 - ❖ Popular (many magazines & newspapers)
 - ❖ Primary (historical documents; audio interviews, &c.)
 - ❖ Secondary (books or articles on a topic—they will often discuss or cite primary resources)
 - ❖ Tertiary (databases, indexes, or other lists of resources)

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- Where should you look?

...it depends.

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Large, general resources (i.e. Encyclopedias, general databases like Academic Search Premier or ProQuest) are a good place to start. They have lots of content, but it may not be specific enough, or there may be too much to sort through if your topic is not specific enough.

Smaller resources (for example, ARTSTOR or Art Full Text) can have content that addresses exactly what you're looking for, but if they don't cover your topic are more likely to give you 0 results.

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- Topic 1: A recent controversy over corporately-funded museum exhibitions and art contests
- Topic 2: The history of ballroom dance as competition

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- Topic 1: A recent controversy over corporately-funded museum exhibitions and art contests

ProQuest News & Newspapers; Wikipedia (citations); NEA press releases

- Topic 2: The history of ballroom dance as competition

International Encyclopedia of Dance; dance organization judges' criteria

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Remember: It's a process.

Doing effective academic research isn't about finding a “right” answer; it's about equipping yourself to know how to look for information, and empowering yourself to know what to do with it.

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- How to search?

KEYWORDS!!!

Looking for Answers, cont'd

- **Topic:**

How might corporate sponsorship of art contests affect the entries' artistic integrity or quality?

Main ideas:

artistic integrity

art contests

corporate sponsorship

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Words and *ideas* are different; try to “pin down” as many of the ideas as you can, in as many ways as you can. Use different ways to say the same thing; think about your keywords as broader (ones that include your topic); narrower (ones that cover only part of your topic); and related (ones that overlap with your topic, but are not exactly the same thing).

Looking for Answers, cont'd

How might corporate sponsorship of art contests affect the entries' artistic integrity or quality?

Broader:

Narrower:

Related:

Looking for Answers, cont'd

How might corporate sponsorship of art contests affect the entries' artistic integrity or quality?

Broader: Art competition; art judging; sponsors/hip; value of art; money; economics

Narrower: diversity of themes in corporately sponsored art

Related: psychology of competition; contest*/competition*; prizes

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Too many results? Use “AND” to add another idea and refine your search—it will bring back only results that contain all the words you choose.

Too few results? Use “OR” to bring in other concepts you might have missed.

- Other search capabilities: truncation (child*), phrase search (“”), elimination (-) [e.g., spam –email]
- “Advanced Search” (in Google, databases, wherever) is perfect for academic research—it lets you combine and search on more than one idea at a time.
- Many times, databases will tell you more about what they can do in a “help” or “thesaurus” section.

- *Tips & Tricks:*

Let other people do the work for you! Found a good resource?
See if it mentions other ideas you hadn't thought of.

Look at **subject headings, abstracts, hyperlinks, bibliographies, and citations** from one resource to find others.

If you're interviewing someone, always end with, “Is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about?”

Take advantage of services such as Interlibrary Loan (ILL) if there are books you desperately need, but your library doesn't have.

Being Engaged

- **Evaluating resources**

A - Authority

B - Bias

C - Currency

D - Documentation

(handout-see next slide*)

*note: although handout says “web source analysis,” many of these questions are applicable to any type of source)



Your name:

ABCD Web Source Analysis

Title of Web Source:

	Answers	Notes
Authority: who created this source?		
What is the domain? <i>example: edu</i> <i>others: com, org, gov, mil, etc.</i>		
Is there a specific organization or corporation publishing this source? If so, which? <i>example:</i> <i>National Public Radio</i>		
What kind of web source is this? <i>Examples: blog, advertisement, magazine, video, interview.</i>		
Is the author's name on the web source?	<i>Select one:</i> Y N	
Bias: what is the purpose and standpoint of this source?		
Is the web source's opinion or purpose clear? What is it? <i>Look for pages that say About, Home, Mission.</i>		
Are there links that try to sell you a product?	<i>Select one:</i> Y N	
What is the purpose of the web source? <i>Some choices:</i> <i>inform persuade sell joke entertain unclear</i>		
Currency: when was this source created?		
Last update		
Documentation: how well does this source support the information it provides?		
Are there links or references to outside sources that support the information it provides?	<i>Select one:</i> Y N	
Are these sources reputable?	 Y N	

Being Engaged

- **Beyond the page—other resources:**
 - ❖ Living experts
 - ❖ Survey data? (www.surveymonkey.com)
 - ❖ Videos, Music, Art, other non-text sources

Being Engaged, cont'd

- **Keeping track:**
 - ❖ Keywords
 - ❖ YOUR Ideas, reflections, insights
 - ❖ Articles (email to yourself from databases, d/l into a folder, and name consistently: For example, Author_ArticleName_Year)
 - ❖ Citations (don't leave it until the end!)
 - ❖ Call numbers
 - ❖ Journal titles
 - ❖ Experts, organizations, institutions, publishers

Producing a Contribution

- ...STOP researching, and start doing something with your research.
- The process of research is iterative; this means that you will do and re-do; throw away and come back to your original ideas, over and over again. This is just how it works!

Producing a Contribution, cont'd

- **Troubleshooting: Don't give up!**
 - ❖ *I can't think of a topic!* Take a deep breath; talk to someone who can help you; think about it from different angles—and give it time.
 - ❖ *I can't find anything!* Remember that research is a process of creation, not finding a magic solution. Go back to the beginning; are your ideas clear? Work on your list of keywords. Where are you searching? If you're still having trouble or can't remember, talk to an expert.

Producing a Contribution, cont'd

- **Troubleshooting:**

- ❖ *It's too much!* Especially with a project, make sure your goals and objectives are clear and manageable. Does everyone have enough to do, or are the tasks unevenly distributed?
- ❖ *Help, my group can't work together!* Group dynamics can be just as critical as good ideas to a successful group project. (There are resources out there on this, including <http://learnhigher.ac.uk/Students/Group-work.html>).

Participating in a Community

- **Using information ethically**
 - ❖ Cite! Give others credit for their words *and ideas*. In fact, it's a good idea to cite every piece of work you read while doing your research.

Resources

- A subject guide to researching the fine arts:
<http://libguides.greenriver.edu/finearts>
- Advanced tips to search Google or Google Scholar (and some databases!)
<http://support.google.com/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=136861&rd=2>
http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html

Resources, cont'd

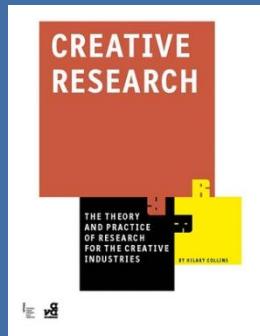
- Online resource about conducting research:
<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/researchproject/weblinks.asp>
- Surveymonkey: www.surveymonkey.com
- Working in groups:
<http://learnhigher.ac.uk/Students/Group-work.html>

Resources, cont'd

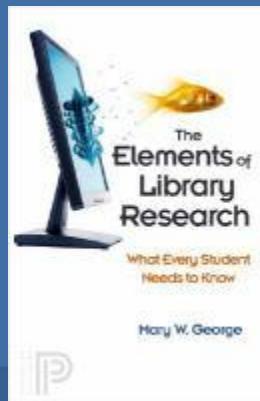
- Open Access databases & indexes (not dependent on affiliation with a school):
 - ❖ The Getty's searchable *Bibliography of the History of Art* (BHA) and *Répertoire de la littérature de l'art* (RILA) [*citations, not full-text]
 - ❖ Google Scholar (www.scholar.google.com)
 - ❖ DMOZ (Open Directory Project):
<http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/>
 - ❖ Smithsonian Collections Search Center:
<http://collections.si.edu/search/>

Resources, cont'd

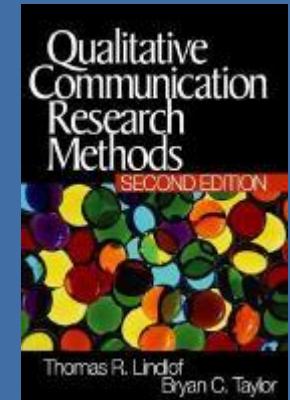
- Books on research: Library of Congress Call Number **H62**; Dewey Decimal Call Number **300**
- Books at Green River:



Creative research: the theory and practice of research for the creative industries / Hilary Collins.
(2010)



The elements of library research : what every student needs to know / Mary W. George. (2008)



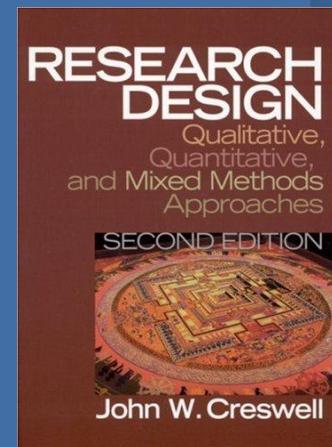
Resources, cont'd

- More Books at Green River:



Principles of research design in the social sciences / Frank Bechhofer and Lindsay Paterson. (2000)

Research design : qualitative & quantitative approaches / John W. Creswell. (1994)



The practice of social research / Earl Babbie. (1995)