



Specialized encyclopedias exist for almost any subject, and can provide an excellent orientation to a new topic. Try your hand at finding and evaluating an encyclopedia article on a topic of your choice.

**I. FINDING AN ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE** – try *either* of these techniques

**A. BROWSING THE REFERENCE COLLECTION** (sometimes the simplest technique!)

Scan the wall poster listing the **Library of Congress Classification Scheme**, or obtain the **LC Classification handout** by the Reference Desk or from “Research Guides” on our website. Choose a **BROAD** category related to your topic, and browse the shelves for that code.

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LC code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

Example: for information about **identity theft**, you might try:

**K** (law),

**HV** (“social pathology” – e.g., crime), or even

**HB-HJ** (commerce / business)

Consider academic departments that would be concerned with your topic, and find that section. If you are having any trouble with this step, ask a librarian for help!

Go to the Reference Collection and browse the shelves at that code for an encyclopedia on your subject.

**B. SEARCHING THE LIBRARY CATALOG** – a couple of useful tricks; try either or both.

Remember to use a **broad** subject – e.g., *medicine*, *climate*, or *advertising* – to identify an encyclopedia; you’ll then check it for your specific topic, such as *hepatitis*, *polar bears*, or *tobacco*.

1. At the **Keyword** search on the home page, search for your broad subject plus *encycl\*op*

The asterisk is a “truncation” character – *encycl\*op* retrieves encyclopedia(s), encyclopaedia(s),...

Example: *anthropology encyclop\**

Search term: \_\_\_\_\_ # Hits: \_\_\_\_\_

2. At the catalog’s main page, click “**More Search Options**” to go to the **Advanced Keyword** screen.

Enter your broad subject (e.g., *climate*) on the top line, searching in “any field.”

In the “**Collection**” box, highlight “**Reference**” and click the “**Submit**” button.

This will find only items in the Reference collection – most of these will be encyclopedias.

Search term: \_\_\_\_\_ # Hits: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose a **printed encyclopedia** from the list, and use the **call number** to find it.

However you found it, make sure you are using a **printed encyclopedia** with **individually signed** articles. (If it has lengthy, signed articles, consider it an encyclopedia even if it calls itself a “dictionary.”)

**FIND AN ARTICLE** (also called an “entry”) in the encyclopedia that relates to your topic.

(Check the **contents**; if that fails, look in the **index**; if that fails, ask for assistance!)

