



# CCC Savvy Researcher

Self-guided  
Term Paper Exercises

## #0: Overview / Refresher Course

Library Website: <http://library.clackamas.edu>

Reference Assistance: (503)657-6958 x2290

This is a review of essential tips & tricks for finding and evaluating information resources for college work:

1. Using the *LC Classification scheme* to find *background* information in *specialized encyclopedias*
2. Using the Library's *catalog* (CougarCat) to find *in-depth* information in *circulating books*
3. Using an *article index* to find *current news & research* in *magazines and journals*
4. Using *search engines* and *directories* to find *give-away* information on the *World Wide Web*

**Remember, if you have any difficulties using the tools or finding information, ask a librarian!**

Select a topic to research: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Can't think of anything? Pick something from Google's *Directory* or the *CQ Researcher*. Ask a librarian.)

Name 2 broad academic subjects to which this topic relates (e.g., anthropology, education, computing...)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### A. SPECIALIZED ENCYCLOPEDIAS – Browsing by LC Category

These are compilations of current knowledge in a field, generally consisting of many articles, each written by an expert on the topic. These can be excellent starting points for research, and exist for every academic field, such as *sociology* or *botany*, and for many narrow topics such as *sleep* or *sharks*.

Use any one of the methods below to find a specialized encyclopedia article ("entry") on your topic.

1. Scan the Library's handout or wall poster listing the **Library of Congress Classification Scheme**.  
Give 2 LC call subject codes likely to cover your topic. (For example, *GR: Folklore* or *ND: Painting*)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

Browse the **Reference** shelves in these areas to select a useful encyclopedia.

2. Search *CougarCat* for an encyclopedia on your broad subject – for example: *religion\* and encyclop\** (\* is a truncation symbol – *religion\** retrieves "religion" or "religions").
3. Open *netLibrary*. Search the "Reference Center" for an entry on your topic in an e-book encyclopedia.

Give a citation for the article you found: \_\_\_\_\_ (circle format: APA MLA )

Describe the article – How long is it? What information is given about the author? How many references?

## B. CIRCULATING BOOKS – Searching *CougarCat*

These books – the ones you can check out – are a good bet for **in-depth** information or **extended argument** on a topic. Like Reference books, they are shelved by LC call number. Although one can often find useful items browsing the shelves by call number, be sure to search the Library’s **catalog**, because the *best* items for your topic may be e-books, or checked out at the moment, or shelved in an unexpected area.

### Essential catalog search tips:

**1. Start with keyword, but watch for subject headings!**

(*Native Americans* gives poor results because the catalog uses *Indians of North America*.)

**2. Think broad!**

(No books on *ecstasy*? A book on *substance abuse* or *drugs* may have a chapter on *ecstasy*.)

If you are new to *CougarCat*, obtain a guide from the handouts rack or under *Research Guides* on our website; view the search examples.

Open *CougarCat* and use a **keyword** search to find items on your topic.

(Poor results? Try another term. **Broad** terms may be best. You can also use truncation: *comput\**)

Keyword search: \_\_\_\_\_ # hits: \_\_\_\_\_

Click on a few promising items and look at the **subject headings**. List any subject terms the catalog uses that are relevant to your topic:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If appropriate, re-do your search using *their* terms.

(Hint: you can click a subject heading to search it, but for best results switch “subject” to “keyword” in the search box that appears – the “subject” listing can be confusing.)

New search: \_\_\_\_\_ # hits: \_\_\_\_\_

Pick an item from the Circulating Collection that is currently available, and go get it.

(If your item is an *e-book*, follow the “read this book now” link into *NetLibrary* to view it.)

Citation: (circle format: APA MLA )

Is the book... \_\_\_\_\_ primarily informative \_\_\_\_\_ building a case or argument  
Is the book... \_\_\_\_\_ the work of a single author \_\_\_\_\_ a collection of work by various authors

What information can you find about the author (or editor, if it is a collection)?

(If your item is an *e-book*, open the Contents tab and scroll to the end to find “about the author.”)

## C. MAGAZINE & JOURNAL ARTICLES – *Academic Search Premier*

Published articles are often excellent sources for current research and “hot topics” in a field. *Journals* focus on *research* articles (by professionals, reporting their new work to their peers). *Magazines* offer *news and feature articles* (by staff or free-lance writers) for the general public.

**Article indexes** let you identify articles on a topic; our most comprehensive index is *Academic Search Premier* from EBSCO, which covers 6,000 publications and provides about half of them in full text. Articles not available full-text or at CCC Library may be obtained through our **Interlibrary Loan** service.

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Obtain an *EBSCO Indexes* guide and *Database Passwords* (for home access) from the handouts rack. (Can't get to CCC? Get the EBSCO guide from our Research Guides page; call Reference for passwords.) Open *Academic Search Premier*, and search for articles on your topic. (Try a **narrow** search here.)

### Essential EBSCO search tips:

1. Use “and” in your search! EBSCO defaults to a *phrase* search.  
(*music censorship* gets about a dozen hits; *music and censorship* gives >200)
2. Start with keyword, watch for subject headings!  
(*soda pop and health* gets a few hits, but *soft drinks and health* gets a few hundred)

Keyword search: \_\_\_\_\_  
# hits: \_\_\_\_\_

Look at the **subject terms** listed on the left side of the results page.  
(You may also want to open a few relevant items and look at the subject terms listed for them.)  
List any EBSCO subject headings that might improve your search results:

Note: if you click a subject term from the list, it will “and” it into your search.  
Work with your search statement, using “and” and “or as appropriate, to get roughly 50-200 articles

Keyword search: \_\_\_\_\_  
# hits: \_\_\_\_\_

Limit to items you can get *quickly*. In *Refine Search* check the boxes for both *CCC Library* and *full text*.  
How many hits are left? \_\_\_\_\_

Get rid of any short newsy items. In *Refine Search*, open the “number of pages” box, and ask for articles more than 1 page long.  
How many hits are left? \_\_\_\_\_

Print or photocopy one useful article.

**Citation:** (circle format: APA MLA )

What information is given about the author?

## D. AN INTRODUCTION TO WEB INFORMATION FOR ACADEMIC WORK

Go to [www.malepregnancy.com](http://www.malepregnancy.com) and explore the site. This is certainly an extraordinary claim, and requires evidence! What are two ways the author attempts to convince us of its credibility?

- a.
- b.

Open *Google's Directory*: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) >> more >> directory.

Search the Directory for “male pregnancy.” Find the [malepregnancy.com](http://malepregnancy.com) site in the results list.

To what **category** have the *Google* editors assigned this site?

Remember:

- Anyone can post anything on the Web – true or false, inane or sublime.
- Information on the Web is being given away. Think about why it's free.
- Use the “assumption of bogosity” – if information on a website is academically credible, there should be *references* for facts stated, along with information about the *author's credentials* and/or the *mission* of any host organization. When in doubt, verify in reliable sources elsewhere! *Google's* directory can be handy to identify known hoaxes, fringe groups, etc.

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Search *Google* or use *Google's Directory* to find a web page with substantial information about your topic (not just an organization's home page or a page full of links).

**Citation:** (circle format: APA MLA )

Describe the webpage – what seems to be its purpose?

What information can you find about the author?

Is it hosted / supported by an organization or institution? If so, what is its mission?

Are there references to sources for the information provided on the site?