



The Savvy Researcher

Self-guided
Term Paper Exercises

#9: Resources for Argument / Issues

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

Reference Assistance: (503)657-6958 x2290

In creating a persuasive argument paper or speech, you will need resources for:

- **Background** – for orientation to the topic and issues under discussion.
- **Current Research** – for recent developments related to the topic.
- **Informed Opinion** – to explore and understand various sides of a controversy.
- **Facts & Statistics** – to support your conclusions and convince your audience.

For background information, specialized encyclopedias are often excellent (see Savvy Researcher #3). For current research, the *Academic Search Premier* article index is a good bet (see Savvy Researcher #5). This exercise will focus on additional CCC Library resources particularly useful for current issues.

A. CO RESEARCHER (Research Gateway >> Find Published Articles; login: *clackamascc*; pw: *puma*)
If *CQR* has done a report on your topic, this can be your best all-around starting point, providing background, statistics, a chronology, various viewpoints and suggested reading.

Do a ‘Quick Search’; try other terms if necessary to find a relevant report. Search term: _____

Date: _____ Title: _____

B. FINDING ARGUMENT IN ACADEMIC SEARCH PREMIER (Research Gateway >> Find Articles)

1. Find the **subject heading** that *ASP* uses for your topic. (This helps eliminate “false hits.”)
 - a. Click the **Subjects** tab. Enter your search term; click Browse. If your term does not appear, it is not a subject heading in *ASP*. Look for related terms *ASP* does use, or try another term.
(e.g., “Stem Cell Research” does not appear, but “Stem Cells” does; use that instead.)
 - b. No luck? Go to **Keyword**, search your term & view results to find the subject heading(s) being used.

Go to **Keyword**. Enter the **subject heading** in the top line. Switch “Default Fields” to “Subject.” Search.
Subject Heading: _____ # Hits: _____

2. **Narrow** your search to articles that present **arguments**. Here are 3 strategies that may help; try each.
 - a. Although *argument* is not a subject heading in *ASP*, some form of *argue* may appear in the **abstract** of a good hit. At the Keyword search screen, with your subject in Line 1, add **argu*** (to get all variations) to your search on Line 2. (Be sure “AND” is selected in the drop-down menu.) Search. # Hits _____
View some results; look at the abstracts. Did this search actually find articles that present arguments?
 - b. For many subjects, *ASP* uses the phrase “--Moral & Ethical Aspects” as a **sub-heading**.
Try using **ethic*** (to get all variations) on Line 2 of your search. # Hits _____
Now switch “default fields” to “subject” on line 2. # Hits _____
Which of these searches gave you better results?

c. Here are some more **sub-headings** *ASP* often uses. Try one or more of these. Circle any that produce good articles for your topic.

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| -- Economic Aspects | -- Law & Legislation | -- Public Opinion |
| -- Government Policy | -- Political Aspects | -- Religious Aspects |
| -- Health Aspects | -- Psychological Aspects | -- Social Aspects |

C. INFORMED OPINION IN NEWSPAPERS (Research Gateway>>Published Articles>>NewsBank)
Newspapers can be excellent sources for informed opinion, especially for local or regional topics.

1. Open *Newsfile*. Instead of searching, pick a **category**: _____
Click on the category; notice the list of subject headings – there may be some you can use!
Now try a keyword search to get a more precise set of articles.
Search statement: _____ # Hits: _____
2. Open *The Oregonian*. This index does not give categories or subject headings. Try this for precision:
Go to “Customized Search.” Search for your keywords in the **lead/first paragraph**.
Search statement: _____ # Hits: _____

D. “HOT TOPIC” BOOKS

Several publishers produce handy compilations of information on “perennial” social concerns such as capital punishment, abortion, gender issues, animal rights, etc.

1. **Article Reprint** Collections: *Opposing Viewpoints, At Issue, & Current Controversies*
Pro/con articles from magazines & journals. All three are in our catalog under “Opposing Viewpoints.”
In *CougarCat*, use a **broad** keyword for a current issue; include *opposing viewpoints* in your search:
Ex: *media and opposing viewpoints*

Search statement: _____ # Hits: _____

Two cautions! The articles are sometimes outdated, and they are a bit tricky to cite properly.

- a. Obtain one of these books and look through it. Pick an article. Find the **original** citation and date.

Book’s year of publication: _____ Article’s original year of publication: _____

- b. Give the MLA citation for this article. (Refer to the Library’s MLA guide; use **reprint in a collection**.)

2. **Topical Mini-Encyclopedias**: *Reference Shelf, Library in a Book*
Do a keyword search on **library in a book** or **reference shelf** to view all titles we have in these sets.
Is there one related to your topic? Examine one and compare the content to the reprint sets.

E. INFORMED OPINION ON THE WEB (Google: www.google.com)

Searching the Web on any social issue will turn up thousands of sites, many of which will provide you with plenty of ranting but little documentation. Try this:

- Open *Google*. Instead of searching, click the **Directory** tab. Find **Society**; click on **Issues**.
Pick a category related to your topic. Google will show you its top-ranked websites in that category.
Scan some sites; give the **titles** and **URL** of one that does a good job of **stating their mission** and **documenting** their facts and assertions.

Category: _____

Website Title:

URL: