NOTE: For an overview of the research process, see EMPOWER at http://library.wichita.edu/empower/

GENERAL TIPS FOR SEARCHING ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

(NOTE: The following techniques usually work with online library catalogs/OPACs, periodical databases, reference databases, search engines, and other standard library resources):

- To search for phrases, enclose them within double quotation marks.
  - “social media”
- To search for multiple endings of words, use an asterisk in place of the variant endings. This technique is known as truncation.
  - paint* (retrieves “painting,” “paintings,” “painter,” “painters,” etc.)
  - educat* (retrieves “educate,” “educated,” “education,” “educational,” etc.)
- To find all terms, use the “and” command. This command narrows your search.
  - recycl* and “green glass”
  - NOTE: Certain resources (e.g., Google products) assume an “and” between multiple search terms, and so you don’t need to include it in those instances.
- To find synonymous/interchangeable terms, use the “or” command (and enclose the phrase within parentheses). This command broadens your search.
  - recycl* and (“green glass” or “brown glass” or plastic)

GETTING STARTED

Because reference works provide (1) short answers to factual questions and/or (2) brief overviews of topics, they’re often a good place to start many research projects. Examples of types of reference sources include dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and directories. Mickel Library owns many good electronic reference databases, among the most useful of which are:

• a collection of over 100 subject-specific encyclopedias published by
  Oxford University Press; a single search goes through all of these
  encyclopedias.
• Credo Reference (http://0-www.credoreference.com.marie.converse.edu/)
  o millions of articles from almost 800 reference resources
• Gale Virtual Reference Library (http://0-infotrac.galegroup.com.marie.converse.edu/itweb/mickel_lcc?db=GVRL)
  o 30-ish reference works published by Gale

Reference Area: Another useful technique for finding overview-type resources is by physically browsing the library’s Reference Area in the appropriate call number area(s).
• Mickel Library’s Reference Area is organized by the Dewey Decimal System (there are guides posted on the ends of the shelves there).
  o If you have any questions about a good place to look, feel free to ask one of the librarians.

The “Open Internet”: This is the free and unregulated Internet. Websites on the Internet often function as the equivalent of reference sources in that they provide short answers to specific questions or brief overviews of topics.
• Evaluating a Website: Because the content of the Internet isn’t necessarily edited for quality by any agency, researchers need to carefully evaluate these sources of information before accepting them as authoritative. To establish a website’s credibility, look for the following:
  • author’s credentials
  • the site’s sponsor or “owner”
  • “last updated” date (some credible sites may or may not contain this information)
• Google
  o probably the best, and certainly the best-known, Internet search engine.
  o some of the “general tips” (above) work in Google (e.g., bound phrase searching), but some do not (truncation)
  o try to use at least three or four (or more if you can think of them) search terms.
NOTE: Google assumes an “and” between search terms, so you don’t need to include it.

FINDING BOOKS

- Mickel Library Catalog (http://marie.converse.edu/screens/opacmenu.html) – lists our library’s books, CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes, periodicals (not the individual articles within them, though), etc.
  - Author searches
    - Type in last name first (when in doubt, experiment; the catalog will usually give you a cross-reference to the “correct” form of the name)
    - Editors, composers, translators, illustrators, actors are often searchable as “authors.”
  - Subject searches: use when searching for a single term and when you know the official Library of Congress subject heading:
    - dogs
    - democracy
    - glacial epoch
  - Keyword searches: use when searching for multiple concepts and/or you don’t know the official Library of Congress subject headings. This type of search looks for your word(s) in various sections of the book (etc.) records: title, subject headings, table of contents, etc.
    - Sample searches:
      - technolog*
        - finds “technology,” “technologies,” “technological,” etc.
      - technolog* and communicat*
        - finds both words, not just one or the other
      - single and (gender or sex) and (education or schools)
        - finds either “gender” or sex,” as well as either “education or schools,” and then “single”

- To find eBooks, use the eBook Collection from EBSCOhost and eBrary eBooks on the EBook Databases page on our library’s web site: (http://www.converse.edu/academics/mickel-library/research/e-book-databases)
To find (and borrow) books beyond our library, use a “union catalog” (a catalog that lists the holdings of multiple libraries) such as:
  - PASCAL DELIVERS (http://www.pascalcat.org/) – lists all the books owned by South Carolina’s college and university libraries.
  - WorldCat (http://www.worldcat.org/) – lists books held by college/university and public libraries across the U.S as well as major international libraries; the largest book catalog in the world.

FINDING PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Periodicals: publications that are published “periodically” and regularly (e.g. annually, quarterly [4 times a year], daily); can be subdivided into several categories:

- Magazines (e.g., Newsweek, National Geographic, People Weekly, Sports Illustrated, Scientific American) – information/entertainment for the general public; especially useful for information on current political and social issues.
- Newspapers (e.g., New York Times, Spartanburg Herald Journal) – information/entertainment for the general public; also useful for information on current political and social issues, especially local-interest issues.
- Scholarly journals (e.g., New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of Modern Literature, Social Psychology Quarterly) – contain articles written by academic specialists; convey specialized, in-depth knowledge to other academic specialists (i.e., professors, graduate students, and, in some cases, undergraduate students).

Periodical Databases (note: these are often simply called “databases” even though this designation is not technically correct): To find references to periodical articles, you’ll need to use some sort of periodical “index” or “database,” most of which now exist in electronic format. In many cases, these databases will provide not only references to articles, but also “abstracts” (summaries) of the articles, and the complete text of them as well.

- General/Multidisciplinary Periodical Databases – Use these to find a good sampling of magazine, newspaper, and scholarly journal articles
  - Academic Search Complete (http://0-search.ebscohost.com.marie.converse.edu/login.aspx?authtype=ip,uid&profile=ehost&defaultdb=a9h) – one of the world’s largest multi-disciplinary databases. Provides indexing to over 12k periodicals (mostly magazines and scholarly journals) and also includes the full text of over 8k of these periodicals.
• Sample search:
  o Topic: What sort of impact has the recycling of personal computers had on the environment?
  o Possible search statements:
    ▪ recycl* and computers and environment*
    ▪ recycl* and computers

  ▪ Readers’ Guide Full Text Mega (http://0-search.ebscohost.com.marie.converse.edu/login.aspx?authtype=ip,uid&profile=ehost&defaultdb=rgm) – covers 450+ periodicals (mostly popular magazines) dating back to the early 1980s; includes the full text of 250+ of these periodicals.
  ▪ Newspaper Source Plus ( http://0-search.ebscohost.com.marie.converse.edu/login.aspx?authtype=ip,uid&profile=ehost&defaultdb=n5h ) – selected articles from over 850 full-text newspapers (and major newswires like the Associated Press); includes several newspapers from South Carolina.

• Locating Articles - To find an article for which you’ve found only a citation, you’ll need to check two places:
  o For e-periodicals:
    ▪ Path: www.converse.edu/academics/mickel-library > Periodicals Available at Converse (select “E-periodicals”)
    ▪ Key in the title (or at least the first word or two of the title) in the box to the right of the box with the words, “Title Begins With.”
  o For periodicals in either paper or microform formats:
    ▪ Path: www.converse.edu/academics/mickel-library > Periodicals Available at Converse (select “Print/Microform Periodicals”)
    ▪ Search by journal title (not article title!)

• If you have any questions about the finding an article, please contact one of the librarians for assistance.

CITING YOUR SOURCES
Students are often confused and intimidated by the process of citing the sources they use in a paper or other academic project. By bearing in mind the purpose of citations, you can save yourself a lot of worry; and this purpose is simply to
1. give proper credit to the creator of an idea you’ve used, whether you’ve quoted this idea exactly or merely paraphrased it and
2. allow your “audience” (whoever reads or observes your work) to trace this idea back to the source you got it from so that they can learn more about it.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no single correct way to cite your sources. Different academic disciplines tend to prefer certain methods, but there are several widely accepted methods within the academic world (the “correct” one is ultimately the one your professor asks you to use):

a. MLA style (often preferred in the humanities)
b. APA style (often preferred in the social sciences)
c. Turabian style (often preferred in music)

While there are web sites that purport to explain these styles, you would be safest in going directly to their respective manuals:

- Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (7th ed., 2007), Reference Area 808.02 T84m 2007.

Mark A. Collier
Spring, 2017