

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE LIBRARY SERVICES

Research Strategies

Efficient research moves from general to specific resources, and requires a plan. The steps in a basic research project are outlined below. Use this outline to work your way through your own research project.

1. **Locate overview or background information** on your topic. Check the library's [Quick Reference](#) page to consult general and specialized encyclopedias to find:
 - Scope of topic
 - Sub-topics
 - Vocabulary
 - Authorities
 - Bibliographies

2. **Narrow your topic:**
 - Develop a research question.
 - Identify the search terms in your question.

3. **Locate research materials**, using the terms identified above. Analyze your topic. What types of materials would contain the most appropriate information on your topic?
 - Books – [CardinalCat](#), the library's online catalog
 - Articles – periodicals databases
 - News coverage – [Lexis Nexis](#)
 - Magazines – [Academic Search Premier](#)
 - Scholarly journals – [JSTOR](#), [Project Muse](#) or [subject specific databases](#)
 - Web sites – try the “[Deep Web](#),” using directories such as
 - Bibliographies
 - If the citation is for a book, use [CardinalCat](#) to determine if Oesterle Library owns it. If not, you can request the book via interlibrary loan in *I-Share*.
 - If the citation is for an article, use “Find Articles/Look Up an Article/[Browse journal, magazine and newspaper holdings](#)” to determine where the article is

available – in the library’s periodicals collection, in full-text in a library database, or via interlibrary loan using “Find Articles/Getting Articles From Other Libraries/[Request an article via Interlibrary Loan](#)” on the library web site.

4. **Evaluate** all information gathered for appropriateness to your research question, credibility, currency, objectivity and accuracy. Select only the credible sources.

▪ **Authority**

- Who provided the information?
- What are the author's credentials?
- What is their reputation as an information provider?
- Does the information provider have the authority or expertise to provide information on that topic?
- Where was the information published? (book, scholarly journal, popular magazine, Internet) What is the credibility level of this source?

▪ **Currency**

- When was the material written?
- Does currency or lack of currency affect the material?
- Is the information provided for current information or for historical purposes?
- When was the last update of the information?

▪ **Scope**

- Does it really address your topic? Is it relevant?
- Is your topic the subject heading of this article, or merely a keyword?

▪ **Objectivity/Accuracy** - Is this source:

- Objective & factual - contains proven facts and information
- Objective, but with a hidden argumentative purpose - carefully selected evidence peppered with biased language or information
- Exploratory - Objective explanation of several different views
- Deliberately argumentative - Does it take an obvious position on a controversial issue?
- Extremist or biased - emotional language, extreme examples, associated with extremist groups

5. **Write** the paper:

- Draft
- Revise
- Final
- [Cite Sources](#) according to appropriate style