

16.3.4: Some Final Tips

Photocopy or print out your articles. Most academic libraries won't let you check out periodicals. This means you either have to read and take your notes on the article while in the library, you have to make a photocopy of the article, or, if it is available electronically, you have to print it out. It might cost you a dollar or two and take a few minutes at a photocopier or a printer, but it will be worth it because you'll be able to return to the article later on when you're actually doing your writing.

Write down all the citation information before you leave the library. When you start using the evidence you find in journals, magazines, and newspapers to support your points in your research writing projects, you will need to give your evidence credit.

The key pieces of information to note about your evidence before you leave the library include:

- the type of periodical (a journal, a magazine, or a newspaper)
- the title of the publication
- the author or authors of the article
- the title of the article
- the date of the publication
- the page numbers of the article

Recording all of this information does take a little time, but it is much easier to record that information when you first find the evidence than it is to try to figure it out later on.

Hyperlink: Chapter Six, "The Annotated Bibliography Exercise," describes the process of keeping track of the research materials you find in the library and on the Internet in a writing project.

Other Library Materials

Chances are, the bulk of your library research will involve books and periodicals. But libraries have many other types of materials that you might find useful for your research projects as well. Here are some examples and brief explanations of these materials.

Government Documents. Most college and university libraries in this country collect materials published by the United States federal government. Given the fact that the U.S. government releases more publications than any other organization in the world, the variety of materials commonly called "government documents" is quite broad. They include transcripts of congressional hearings and committee meetings; reports from almost every government office, agency and bureau; and pamphlets, newsletters, and periodic publications from various government sponsored institutes and associations. If your research project is about any issue involving an existing or proposed federal law, a government reform or policy, a foreign policy, or an issue on which the U.S. Congress held hearings about, chances are the federal government has published something about it.

Check with your librarian about the government documents available and how to search them. Most of the materials published by the U.S. government can be researched using the same databases you use to search for periodicals and books.

Interlibrary Loan. Most college and university libraries provide their patrons ways to borrow materials from other libraries. The nature of this service, usually called *interlibrary loan*, varies considerably. Many community college, college, and university libraries in the U.S. have formed partnerships with other libraries in their geographic areas to make interlibrary loan of books and even periodicals quite easy and convenient. On the other hand, many other libraries treat each interlibrary request as a special case, which means it frequently isn't as easy or as quick.

Theses and dissertations. If your college or university has graduate programs, your library probably has a collection of the theses or dissertations written by these graduate students. These documents are usually shelved in a special place in the library, though at most libraries, you would use the same database you used to find books to find a thesis or a dissertation.

Rare books and other special collections. Many college and university libraries have collections of unusual and often valuable materials that they hold as part of a special collection. Most of these special collections consist of materials that can be loosely classified as rare books: books, manuscripts, and other publications that are valuable because of their age, their uniqueness, the fame of the author, and so forth. Your research project probably won't require you to use these unusual collections, but rare book and other special collection portions of the library can be fun to visit.

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