Research Toolkit Summary Package

The Libraries Toolkit is a Open Education Resource created by the UVic Libraries to help students develop their information literacy. By completing the toolkit, students should be aware of the key concepts of information fluency, academic conventions and standards, be able to plan a research paper or project with these concepts in mind, and feel confident using the library, completing assignments, and meeting expectations.

This PDF is a collection of the resources, supplementary links, and module summary sheets contained within the Toolkit. It can be used to supplement the Toolkit or as a quick reference guide. For more information, contact your Subject Librarian.
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Module 1: Introduction to scholarly communication and academic standards

Summary

You might believe that your work as a university student is inconsequential, or that it matters only to you and the professor grading you, but this is just not so! As a university student, you are now a scholar. As a scholar, you are part of the scholarly conversation. You engage with other researchers any time you read, research, and write – regardless of the assignment.

Watch this video to learn more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB9pAZPJe_g (2 minutes)

Being part of this conversation comes with some responsibility. This conversation has value – financial value, social value, and personal value to the authors who produce it. Scholars are required to acknowledge this value every time they use an idea which is not their own. This links your work into the existing scholarly conversations. It demonstrates your engagement with existing knowledge, and gives credibility to the new knowledge that you are creating. Watch this video to learn more: www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7dy5GIXxHk (2.38 minutes).

Review this diagram of the Research Cycle:

Researchers and authors follow these steps to produce the books and articles that you read in your research. As you are part of the scholarly conversation, you are also part of the scholarship cycle. You might feel that your only participation here is in the discovery phase (finding articles for your assignment), but actually, you are involved in all of these steps.

Resources

- Research 101: Scholarship is a Conversation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB9pAZPJe_g
- Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7dy5GIXxHk
Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- Read UVic’s policy on academic integrity [http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html](http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html)
- Professor study tips: [https://youtu.be/7SaXndD_KdI](https://youtu.be/7SaXndD_KdI)
Module 2: Planning an assignment the scholarly way

Summary

So you have to write a research assignment? The first few steps involve no writing at all, just thinking...

**Step One** – Read your assignment carefully. Instructors often put a lot of information into the assignment description. Make sure you read it carefully and take note of any requirements before beginning. Does it require a certain length, formatting, or citation style? What kinds of sources are required, or suggested? Make a list of each criteria before you start, and review the list when you are finished, to ensure you have met all of the stated requirements.

**Step Two** - Consider your topic. You may have been given a broad topic to work with, or you might be asked to come up with your own. Either way, make sure the topic is the right size. With the length of your assignment in mind, think about the size and scope of your topic – limiting by time or place, who you intend to investigate, and what you want to learn will inform your research process and ensure you have a feasible topic. In university, you’re usually asked to produce an argument based essay, so make sure your topic has room for an argument or conclusion that goes beyond merely describing events or listing facts.

**Step Three** – Your research question. Your research question directs your research – how and where you’ll look for information, and what information you’ll use as evidence. Ultimately, the answer to this question will become your thesis. (It’s tempting to propose a thesis at this stage, but don’t! This approach will seriously bias your research and could lead to incomplete answers!) Your research question should include the limits on size and scope, and indicate what you hope to learn, but at this stage, you are asking the question, not answering it.

To learn more, please watch the following videos

- Narrowing a Topic and starting your search - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygg2ueYXfW8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygg2ueYXfW8) (2 min)
- Making Sense of Essay Topics - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EnVkdrrh0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EnVkdrrh0s) (2 min)

Resources

- Narrowing a Topic and Starting your Research: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygg2ueYXfW8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygg2ueYXfW8)
- Making sense of Essay Topics: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EnVkdrrh0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EnVkdrrh0s)
Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- How to choose keywords: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoujP8KoK7E
- Assignment Calculator www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUeTzUMu4gU (1:34)
- Planning a Paper https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQRUzt5F8oU (1:37)
- Mind mapping from Guelph University Library: http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/get-assistance/studying/effective-studying/concept-mapping
Module 3: Understanding Research Tools

Summary

Now that you have a research question ready, you can start finding sources.

Why should you care about using scholarly tools?

It’s tempting just to use Google and whatever source it gives you, but this is problematic for a number of reasons. First, Google does a poor job of returning academic sources, which you are mainly expected to use in university. Secondly, Google prioritizes information that is openly available online, when most academic sources are not free to read, and thirdly, Google will not show you resources that are unavailable online.

Instead, scholars use a variety of tools which provide access to scholarly information (written by and for scholars). These tools return lists of scholarly sources, link you through to read them via UVic Libraries subscriptions, and can point to information found only in print.

Scholarly tools can also be discipline specific, provide more advanced tools and results-limiting options, and generally have more options for the researcher to refine their results and find the best information for their topic and context. They can save you time by pre-limiting the stuff you don’t want, and pre-selecting the stuff you do want.

As a scholar, you want to be part of the scholarly conversation. Google does not allow you to this, while scholarly tools do – by showing you full journals, following citations backwards and forwards in time*, and grouping content under specific subject headings. These will save you time and effort, and keep you in the scholarly conversation.

*Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) does provide some citation linking, but otherwise has many of the same issues as Google.

Happily, UVic Libraries provides a lot of scholarly research tools, and pays for you to access the content listed within them. If you need a book or article that isn’t available, you can link directly to Interlibrary Loan to request it.

Google is a great tool for pre-research, but once you are ready to start your scholarly research, it’s no longer the best option.

What kind of sources are you looking for?

Your assignment probably asks for specific kinds of sources, and may even tell you how many of each to use. The most common types of sources requested are Scholarly, Popular, Primary and Secondary.

Read through these pages on Scholarly vs Popular http://help.library.ubc.ca/evaluating-and-citing-sources/scholarly-versus-popular-sources/ and Primary vs Secondary https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/tips/primvsec/index.php so that you can identify common types of sources when you encounter them.
Different tools work best for finding different kinds of sources. Knowing which tools will best help you meet your criteria will save you lots of time and frustration.

Resources

- Primary or Secondary Sources: [https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/tips/primvsec/index.php](https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/tips/primvsec/index.php)

Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- Searching Google Scholar and Library Databases - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyV6NoCI8J0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyV6NoCI8J0) (2 min)
- Make the Research Come to You [subject guides, Google Alerts] - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mP_jv1Vlqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mP_jv1Vlqw) (2 min)
- Summon 2.0 - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fahKbXY0VhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fahKbXY0VhY) (3 min)
- Using Wikipedia - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRv3nnHE3E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRv3nnHE3E) (3 min)
Module 4: Using Keywords

Summary

The keywords you choose can make or break your research, because many research tools aren’t smart enough to go beyond matching your exact words and phrases. Using keywords effectively can ensure that your research is complete and balanced.

- Leave out words like compare, contrast, or provide. Stick to words that deal with your topic, not what you’re trying to do with your topic.
- Let your research question provide your initial keywords. If you’re struggling, revisit your research question.
- Aim to represent three or four different aspects of your topic in each set of keywords. For example: “Economic participation by women in British Columbia at Confederation” includes what, who, where, and when. No more one-word searches!
- If your keywords aren’t working like you expect, try again! Each search you run can teach you something to improve the next search.
- Consider all known synonyms for each aspect of your topic – try them all in turn. Review results to note how well each works, or what kinds of sources each provides. Use a variety of words to reflect different points of view or schools of thought on a topic.

The keywords you use can reinforce your filter bubble, making it more difficult to find information. Read this information from the American Public University System about filter bubbles, how they affect you, and how to *pop* them for better research: http://apus.libanswers.com/faq/120117

Resources

- Filter Bubbles: http://apus.libanswers.com/faq/120117
- University of Texas Libraries Keyword Builder: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/keywords/index.php

Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- View this Ted Talk to learn more about filter bubbles and how they affect you: https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=tedspread
- Referencing different points of view, or counter arguments, help support your claims. Learn more at Harvard University: http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/counter-argument
Module 5: Assessing and incorporating research sources

Summary

Popular vs Scholarly?

We apply different criteria to different kinds of sources, so it’s important to know how to identify each type. Watch this 3 minute to learn what scholars mean when they say “scholarly” and “popular” - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCL08k6760A

How to read a citation?

It’s very helpful to know how to read a citation, which is a reference to a source. You need to know if the item referred to in each citation is a book, an article, or something else. Your assessment of the source (Does it meet your criteria? Is it credible? Will it be useful to you?) starts with the citation.

Look at this citation and its parts. Which parts tell you that this refers to a journal article?

- article title: Polar Bears in a Warming Climate
- article authors: By: Derocher, Andrew E.; Lunn, Nicholas J.; Stirling, Ian.
- journal title: Integrative & Comparative Biology
- date: Apr2004
- volume and issue number: Vol. 44 Issue 2
- article page numbers: p163-176
- article page numbers: 14p, 1 chart; (AN 14040431)

Some parts of the citation help you assess whether the article meets your instructor’s stated criteria. The citation also gives you enough information to find this article so you can read it – often with a link to the full text, sometimes via UVic Libraries’ link resolver.

Assessing your sources is very important, but not always straightforward. You can break the process down into three parts: before, during, and after reading:

- Before reading: Describe the source. Is it a book or a journal article? Who are the authors, where and when was it published? Are there subject headings or keywords you can skim to determine if the article is on topic for you? Read the abstract, if one is provided. You will reject many sources before reading the full text of any, and that’s okay – don’t waste time reading articles if you can decide, at this stage, whether they will be useful to you.
- While reading: Assess. Ask yourself if it is credible and reliable. Is it biased? Do the evidence and conclusions make sense? Does it cite credible sources? Is it situated in your discipline and on topic? Does it use scholarly language?
After reading: Reflect. Consider whether the source will be useful to you, and how you might use its evidence in your paper.

Thoughtful consideration of your sources will ensure that your research is scholarly and balanced, and the best it can be.

One easy way to assess information from any source is the CRAAP test: https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf

Some librarians believe that the CRAAP test is somewhat outdated, as its focus is on assessing the source itself instead of looking for corroboration and other information from outside that source. What do you think?

Resources

- Scholarly and Popular Sources: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCL08k6760A
- Applying the CRAAP Test: https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf

Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- Annotated Bibliographies (UVic Libraries) http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/bibliographies/
- Evaluating Journal Articles with the CRAAP Test (3 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5Se7IxSANM
- The Quest for Relevant Sources - UVic Libraries (2 min) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWk01ZJ9wlg
- Evaluating Web Pages - Berkeley Library lib guide: http://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources
Module 6: Thinking about your thesis statement

Summary

After you’ve done your research, you are ready to turn your research question into a thesis.

The features of a strong thesis are similar to the features of a strong research question, and include things like supportability, reasonableness, taking the form of an argument or statement, and fitting your stated scope. Your evidence should support your thesis (though you will address counter-arguments to when building your argument).

A thesis statement can be one sentences or multiple sentences as long as it conveys the necessary information in an understandable way.

Watch these two short videos to learn more about defining and strengthening your thesis statement:

- UVic Libraries, Defining a Thesis Statement (3 min) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cuvahu0KMBY
- Strengthening Your Thesis Statement (2 min) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZzpzdO7YA

Resources


Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- OWLPURDUE strong thesis statement: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/01/
Module 7: Citing Sources

Summary

In Module 6 you learned how to read and assess a citation. We cite for many reasons:

- To engage in the scholarly conversation
- To demonstrate that you’ve done your research
- To add credibility to your argument and evidence
- To allow the reader to find the source you’ve used, and assess your interpretation of it

Most citation styles require the same basic information that allows your reader to assess the source, and find it if they wish: author, title, year, publisher, place of publication...

We use standardized formats, developed for each discipline, to facilitate that scholarly conversation. Some use footnotes, others use endnotes. Some use abbreviations, some don’t allow them. These styles are updated frequently, to keep pace with the changing way we access and use information.

Watch this short video about style guides:  https://youtu.be/3c_qSE8DBfM

Unsure of when to cite? When in doubt, cite it! Read this page from UVic libraries on Avoiding Plagiarism to learn when to cite, and when it’s not necessary: http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php

There are software options that will help you to craft citations and insert them into your paper. Consider this list from UVic Libraries: http://libguides.uvic.ca/c.php?g=256836&p=1714605. Note that any citation “generator” is likely to be quite dumb, and you’ll need to carefully proofread their output for capitalization, punctuation, and other errors.

Resources

- Citation Styles with APA examples: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c_qSE8DBfM
- Citation Management at UVic: http://libguides.uvic.ca/c.php?g=256836&p=1714605

Bonus Resources for super scholars:

- Why are there so many citations styles? (text): https://libraries.mercer.edu/research-tools-help/citation-tools-help/why-are-there-so-many-different-citation-styles
- UVic Libraries specific citation styles: http://libguides.uvic.ca/citations
- Harvard University: The Exception – Common Knowledge: http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342055