

## Here are some suggestions for locating references for your research paper

Although it is certainly appropriate for you to express your personal opinions in a paper, the quality of your paper will depend very heavily on the quality of the sources that you use to prepare it. This Guide should help you to locate good sources.

### WHAT SOURCES SHOULD YOU USE?

Best are:

- Recently published books written by psychologists or scholars in related fields, including authored books (the entire book is written by the author) and edited books (which contains original or reprinted articles/chapters written by other authors).
- Recent scholarly periodicals in psychology and related fields - note that many full-text articles are available on-line or through electronic databases.
- Web sites of legitimate scientific and professional organizations and created for use by students, professionals and researchers (for example, the American Psychological Association, the National Institute of Mental Health).
- Government documents

Not as good are, and generally to be avoided:

- Dictionaries, encyclopedias (including Wikipedia), textbooks, books written by people outside the field, books written for a more general or popular audience, or books that are significantly out-of-date, self-help books
- Popular or general interest periodicals, including newspapers and magazines, newsletters, pamphlets and brochures, etc., as well as scholarly periodicals in other fields
- Popular (especially ".com") Internet sites or pages that have been created by organizations primarily for viewing by the general public.
- Blogs

### WHERE DO YOU FIND SOURCES?

#### In the Library

College and university libraries are best because they emphasize scholarly material, either in person or through approved electronic access. City and town public libraries and bookstores are much trickier because much of the information available through those sources will be for general audiences and thus not always appropriate for college level term papers.

- *In the stacks:* Library books are organized by subject, and librarians can help you to find the sections most likely to contain books related to your subject. Remember that some library books on the shelf may not be suitable because they are old and out-dated, textbooks, etc. Periodicals are located in a specific area of the library, organized alphabetically by title of the periodical, and then arrayed in volumes containing all the individual issues for a designated time period. If you already know the article you are looking for, locate the correct volume and turn to the appropriate page. You can also browse through

- periodicals by looking at the Table of Contents of individual issues contained within the volumes.
- *Searchable databases:* A Reference Librarian can show you what the library offers in searchable databases, which range from good old-fashioned index card files to printed listings, microfilm and microfiche copies of periodicals, electronic databases (both on-line and on CD/DVD). Electronic databases can help you to find references to published books, periodicals, and other documents, and they may also contain brief abstracts (summaries) or the material, but you would then have to locate the actual published material in the stacks or at other libraries or through inter-library loan arrangements. Electronic databases may also take you directly to full-text copies of the published material, which you can then print and use.

Depending on the library, you might also be able to use your own computer to access electronic databases. Networked computers on campus might also allow you to link into a college library's databases. At Lowell, this can be done through any computer wired into the university's local area network. Some libraries also allow for remote access through other computers (including your computer at home), but this might require that you set up an account.

#### From Existing Sources You Already Have

The required readings for your course probably cite hundreds of references, which will be cited in the relevant pages of the text and listed in the References section toward the end of the book. You might be able to find worthwhile references this way.

Also remember that good sources usually contain bibliographies or reference lists, so you can always leap frog from one source to another. Start with any one source you have located and check out its references to see if you can find some that might be helpful; then, with specific author and title and publication information, you might be able to locate that reference. Then you can use it to check for others that you might find, and so on.

[Note that when you find references in one source, you cannot cite them unless you go out to locate them and read them yourself.]

#### On the Internet

Using the Internet is very tricky; sure, there is an enormous amount of information, but it varies enormously in quality. The Internet provides you access to three fundamentally different types of information:

- Web sites (usually with *www* in the address) developed and maintained by individuals and organizations and which have posted information relevant to the topics or issues that they are concerned with
- Digitized articles that were originally published in print form in some book or periodical and that have been electronically copied to be accessible via the Internet
- Electronic journals that exist only on the Internet

What is often confusing to students is that these three overlap. You might go to a web site hosted by the XYZ organization, but as part of the web site there are links to digitized articles and/or to electronic journals (perhaps even an electronic journal created by the XYZ organization). For all three types of information, you must be able to critically evaluate the quality of the information:

- For a web site, what is the organization? Most sites have an 'About Us' link so you can check this out. Is it designed primarily for a specialized audience of students and faculty in colleges and universities and/or for professionals and researchers in the field, or is it for the general public, or for patients and their families, consumers, etc. Some web sites might have pages to appeal to both types of audience, but your focus should be on the more specialized pages
- For digitized journal articles and electronic journals, the same question applies: what is the journal? Who is it designed for? Your focus should be on those articles digitized from print periodicals or electronic journals that are primarily written by and for specialists in the field rather than for general audiences

#### HOW DO I LOCATE SPECIFIC REFERENCES?

Knowing *how* to search is also important. Old-fashioned searches (lists, card files, browsing through the stacks) often allow only for searching by author or title or fairly broad subject area. Electronic searches can be far faster, more extensive, and more focused, but also require more skill. Think creatively about various key words that might link you to relevant sources, and also learn how to use the search rules (using AND, OR, quotes, etc) to help you zero in on what you want without being swamped by hundreds of useless hits. Most searchable databases provide search tips, and on campus the Reference Librarians can guide you as well. If you already have names of authors or titles of article, you can usually enter those into your search.

Here's how you can use Lowell's electronic library:

- Use your browser to go to <http://library.uml.edu/>
- Click on *Off Campus Users Login*
- Enter your username and password; the new convention, as of September 2006, is that your username is your UML e-mail address (firstname\_lastname@student.uml.edu) and your password is your UML e-mail password
- Click the *Login* button to return to the library's homepage (if your username and password are not accepted, you will get an error message) – if you have problems logging into the library or if you have any question about your email address or password, you might need to contact the UML Help desk 978-934-HELP (4357).
- Once logged in, you might want to spend some time at <http://libguides.uml.edu.libproxy.uml.edu/content.php?pid=1156>, a guide prepared by one of the reference librarians to help you make full use of the library's electronic resources in psychology
- From the library's homepage, click on *Databases*
- Click on *Psychology*
- On the page showing all the Psychology Databases, most useful to you will be *PsycInfo (Ebsco)*; click that link

- This brings you to the screen where you can begin doing your search - *Advanced Search* provides more options than *Basic Search*
- In the search box, enter information for the topic you wish to explore; the *Search Tips* link will guide you if you don't know how to enter key words for a search - do NOT click *Search* yet
- Under "Limit Your Results," select 'Linked Full Text'
- Scroll farther down to the boxes labeled *Age Groups* and *Population Group* and make specific selections there if you have any, or else leave as *None applied*
- Now scroll back to the top and click *Search*
- This will produce your results, ranging from 0 to perhaps a hundred or more; each result is a link that you can click that will take you to a summary of the article
- If the summary sounds good, you can click the link to the full-text article itself to decide whether it is appropriate (an actual research study), interesting to you, and one that you understand well enough to enable you to write an intelligent paper – be sure to select the PDF version, not the HTML [The PDF version will be presented as a series of individual pages, just as they appeared in the original hard copy publication, which makes it possible to cite page numbers if you use any direct quotations; moreover, HTML versions often do not reproduce tables or graphs very well]
- Another way to locate articles from journals is to locate the exact name of a published article elsewhere and then copy its exact title to enter directly into the Search box in PsycInfo.

Note that among all your search options, there is a box for *Full Text* - if you check this, then you will only get results for articles that are available as full-text articles; if you don't click this box, you will get many more results, but only with brief abstracts, so if you find one you want to use as a reference, you will have to find another way to locate the full-text article.

**For more guidance on how to use PsycInfo, go to <http://www.brainshark.com/uml/vu?pi=387368045>**

It is also possible to do searches elsewhere on-line. Popular search engines are less desirable, because they do not screen sites for academic or scientific quality and thus might give you a lot of "junk." Especially helpful is to access search engines that other university libraries, healthcare and government institutions and professional organizations make available, many of which will not only identify references for you but may also bring you to full-text on-line journals so that you don't have to access the hard copies in print or microfiche/microfilm.

*Please note that if you do locate published material from electronic databases that duplicates what was first in print, you must still cite it in the text of your paper the way you would cite any other reference, by giving the author or authors' last name and year of original print publication. In your References list at the end of your paper, you cite the reference in the usual APA-style way: author(s) (last name, first initial), the year of original publication in parentheses, the title of the article, and where it was originally published (name of journal, volume number, pages); in addition, you should also include in brackets Electronic version, placed directly after the article's title – you do not need to specify the electronic database, that database's identifying number, or the complete URL Internet address or the date you accessed it. If you locate published material that is*

*electronic only, that is, not a duplicate of anything first published in print (e.g., material from an organization's web site, or from a fully electronic on-line journal), you must include at the end of your reference: "Retrieved...(date)...from....(complete URL).*