

Designing a Library Research Strategy

The University of Texas at Austin, Fine Arts Library

This outline of a research strategy is intended as a general guide, to help you find what you need with greater efficiency. It can be varied depending on specific needs, but remember to consider these basic steps.

- I. Select your **TOPIC**; limit it to a manageable scope. If your topic is too broad, you will find more information than you can retrieve. If it is too narrow, you will find very little information.
- II. Consult an **ENCYCLOPEDIA** (general or subject specific) for an overview of your topic. Note key words or subject terms that can be used in your search. Also, look for bibliographies at the end of encyclopedia articles. They will lead you to additional sources of information.
- III. Use **DICTIONARIES** (general or subject specific) for unknown or obscure words and terms, and for related terms.
- IV. Check for the availability of **BIBLIOGRAPHIES** on your subject to identify lists of books and/or articles already gathered by previous researchers. If there are no specialized bibliographies on your topic, check the bibliographies of recent books and encyclopedias.
- V. **REFINE** your topic. Using sources gathered so far, clarify the scope and depth of the subject or problem you want to research.
- VI. **SEARCH** for books and periodical articles.
 - A. **PERIODICALS** generally provide more up-to-date and detailed information than books. Use relevant terms and/or keywords. Locate appropriate periodical and newspaper indexes and/or abstracts in Databases & Indexes to Articles, then search these databases. Once you have identified a list of articles, check the library's holdings by performing title searches in The Library Catalog.
 - B. **BOOKS--AUTHOR/TITLE**. Using the author and title citations you found through the steps above, perform author and/or title searches in The Library Catalog to determine availability and location of these books.

- C. BOOKS--SUBJECT SEARCHING.** There are two methods of subject searching. First, you can use Library of Congress subject headings for thorough subject searches. Consult the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) to determine the proper subject heading(s) for your topic. Secondly, if you are not sure of the proper subject heading, you can perform subject keyword searches in The Library Catalog.
- VII. **FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES.** For additional sources check the footnotes and bibliographies of the books and articles that you found most useful.
- VIII. After locating periodical articles and books, you are ready to consider additional sources to supplement and help you to evaluate your data.
- A. **BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES** should be consulted for information on names discovered in your search. Specialized materials concentrate on biographies according to gender, geographic area, ethnic background, occupation, etc. Some sources have bibliographies and lists of an artist's work.
- B. **BOOK REVIEWS** assist when evaluating material.
- C. **EXHIBITION CATALOGS** are indexed by subject and are widely available.
- C. **DISSERTATIONS** are indexed by subject in [Dissertation Abstracts](#) and are often available electronically or through interlibrary loan if not held by the University of Texas Libraries.
- D. **OTHER SOURCES** include non-book material, such as **SLIDES AND VIDEOS; CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS; ORAL HISTORIES; ARCHIVAL MATERIALS; ORGANIZATIONS; GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS;** and **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS,** to name a few.
- IX. For evaluating and critiquing art, look for the following recommended **ART RESEARCH GUIDES**
- Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 2003.
N 7476 B37 2003 FAL Dictionary Stand
- Carrier, David. *Writing about Visual Art*. New York: Allworth Press, 2003.

N 7476 C378 2003 FAL

Goldman, Bernard. *Reading and Writing in the Arts: A Handbook*. Rev. ed. Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1978.
NX 620 G6 1978 FAL Ref

Gray, Carole. *Visualizing research: a guide to the research process in art and design*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004.

Jones, Lois Swan. *Art Information and the Internet: How to Find It, How to Use It*. Phoenix: Oryx, 1999.
N 59 J66 1999 FAL Ready Ref

Jones, Lois Swan. *Art Information: Research Methods and Resources*. 3rd ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1990.
N 85 J64 1990 FAL Ready Ref

Kleinbauer, W. Eugene. *Research Guide to the History of Western Art*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1982.
N 380 K56 1982 FAL Ref

Nelson, Robert S. and Richard Shiff. *Critical Terms for Art History*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
N 34 C75 2003 FAL Reserves

Sayre, Henry M. *Writing About Art*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999.
N 7476 S29 1999 FAL Dictionary Stand

Tucker, Amy. *Visual Literacy: writing about art*. Boston: Mc-Graw Hill, 2002.
N 7476 T83 2002 FAL

X. To polish your writing consult one of these **WRITING AIDS** or **PUBLICATION MANUALS**.

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 5th ed. Washington D.C.: The Association, 2001.
BF 76.7 P82 2001 FAL Dictionary Stand

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Z 286 E43 U54 FAL Dictionary Stand

Chicago Manual of Style. 14th ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993.
Z 253 U69 1993 FAL Dictionary Stand

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 2nd ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1998.
PN 147 G444 1998 FAL Dictionary Stand

Strunk, William. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.
PE 1408 S772 2000 PCL and UGL

Thomas, R. Murray. *Theses and Dissertations: a guide to planning, research, and writing*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 2000.
LB 2369 T458 2000 PCL Ref

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
LB 2369 T8 1996 FAL Dictionary Stand

For assistance citing electronic resources, online style guides are available at <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/students/citing/index.html>

For assistance evaluating information, an excellent guide is available at <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/students/find/eval.html>

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