

10 Myths of Library Research

1

RESEARCH IS BORING!

First, ask yourself, “What do I care about?” What issues make your heart pound just thinking about them? Do opponents of your point of view really set you off? Great! The more passionate you are about your topic, the more you will enjoy researching and writing about it.

For issue ideas, check out the list of popular topics in the InfoTrac database, Opposing Viewpoints, or ask a librarian for a book of topic ideas. If your paper is not an issue paper, relate it to your chosen field of study.

2

I’M BOTHERING THE LIBRARIAN!

Okay, I admit, the librarians probably look busy at the reference desk, clicking and typing at the computer. Would you prefer that they sit and stare at you while you search the Internet, waiting for your questions? I didn’t think so.

The truth is, the reason they are sitting at the reference desk is to be available to answer your questions—they are experts at library research. However, rather than sit and stare, they work on projects like buying books for the collection and updating tip sheets. Whatever they may be working on, they are more than happy to be interrupted to answer your questions—that’s what they’re here for!

3

I DON’T HAVE TIME TO USE THE LIBRARY!

If you have time to use the Internet, you have time to use the library. In fact, using the library is likely to save you time because the librarians specifically collect material related to programs of study offered at Baker.

Still, if you want to do all your research from your home computer, you can use the library’s online databases for access to 17,400 e-books, 120 reference titles, and 10,000 magazine and journal titles. Just go to www.baker.edu/library and click on Magazine/Journal/Database Resources.

4

I CAN JUST COPY AND PASTE INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET!

Any time you use someone else’s words and try to pass them off as your own, it is called *plagiarism*. You can use quotes in your paper, as long as you *cite your sources*. You can also paraphrase from somebody else’s work, but you still must *cite your source*. You should have a number of sources cited in any research paper, but the majority of your paper should consist of your own thoughts and interpretations of what you have read.

APA and MLA citation guides are available in the library and on the library’s website. You can get additional help with citations either in the library or in the learning center.

5

I DON’T HAVE TIME TO READ ANOTHER BOOK!

Usually when you use a book for research, you do not need to read the entire thing. Use the table of contents in the front of a book to discover which chapters are most relevant to your topic. Use the index at the back of a book to find pages that contain information about your specific topic.

You will often find valuable info in books that would never have been found searching the Internet. To find out what we have on your topic, go to www.baker.edu/library and click on Book Catalog. Limit your search to Clinton Twp.

6

I WILL NEVER USE RESEARCH SKILLS IN THE “REAL WORLD”!

The research skills you acquire in college will be essential throughout your life. Whether searching for a bargain on a mattress or making a decision to move to a new city, finding and evaluating information effectively is your ticket to success.

As you learn how to find and evaluate information for a research project, think about how you will need to do this throughout your life to keep up with changes in technology and changes in your field of work.



1

I SHOULD WRITE MY PAPER *BEFORE* I START MY RESEARCH!

Interesting concept. My question to you is: How do you know that you will find information to support what you've written?

If you're instructor has specifically designed his/her assignment to get you to write first, by all means follow those instructions. It still may be a good idea, however, to do some preliminary searching to make sure there is some information out there on your topic.

8

NOTHING HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT MY TOPIC!

Not all information can be found searching Google. Chances are that something has been written about your topic. If you cannot find enough information, ask a librarian for help. Start your research early in case we need to request items from other libraries (InterLibrary Loan).

If you get close to zero results in a database or search engine, you may be using too many keywords or your keywords may be too specific. Try broadening your search (use Health Care instead of "delivery of healthcare in the United States", or Memory instead of Déjà vu. Use a thesaurus to find alternate keywords.

If you still do not find anything, you may need to think about changing your topic.

9

EVERYTHING IS ON THE INTERNET!

With millions of websites and billions of web pages, it would certainly seem that all information is on the Internet. There is still, however, a great wealth of information that is not. Some of this information is housed in libraries and archives. Sometimes a printed book has just the information you were looking for!

Even many of the books, magazines, and journals that are online are not available for free. Libraries subscribe to databases so their patrons have access to such digitized collections.

10

WIKIPEDIA HAS ALL THE INFORMATION I NEED!

Wikipedia is great. It covers almost every topic you can imagine. Like any general encyclopedia, it is a great place to get background information on a subject that's new to you, and it often has good references to other works on a topic.

Warning: Wikipedia entries can be edited by *anybody*. Although many knowledgeable people post articles, so do many hackers and spammers, who may post completely false or inappropriate information. For more reliable information, start at the library or a more reputable website.

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