

CS100 Video Tutorial 3 Finding Sources that Answer Your Research Question

Hello. In this tutorial, I'll discuss how you can find sources that answer your research question.

A big problem many students have every year in the Annotated Bibliography assignment is not necessarily finding sources, but actually finding sources that answer their research question.

The reasons for this are unclear.

But it's not too difficult to imagine why this might be happening.

People will often leave their research to the last minute, thinking that it's easy to find things.

The problem with that is that they'll either be overwhelmed with results and don't know what sources are the best ones to use, and as a result also select articles and books that don't really answer their research question.

So, my first tip is to start your research early to avoid being overwhelmed at the last minute.

Give yourself more time than you think you need.

Most people underestimate how long it will take to get to really good, credible sources for their assignments, probably because of all the non-scholarly information freely available.

Starting early will help you to get an idea what kind of research has been done on your topic.

It can help you identify important themes in the research, and as you get a better idea of what research is available on your topic, you'll feel less overwhelmed.

My second tip is to start with a broad search on your topic.

Instead of starting your search for articles to answer your specific question, in the beginning stages of your research, you might want to start with one, or two simple keywords, like "Polaroid" or "instant camera."

In the example here using ProQuest, I've done a more broad search linking together three more general terms: Polaroid, "instant camera" OR "instant photograph*"

We can scan the results to see what themes emerge in the research, and this is most easy to do with articles.

Scan the article titles and the abstracts for the overall theme of the article.

So, you may be wondering what I mean by looking for themes that emerge in the research.

Many times, I'll have students come to my office with a research question that's already very very specific and in this case, we could say something like: "How did instant photography impact the development of the video game industry?"

Now I'm making that question up, but if there are no articles or books that have to do with that particular research topic you wouldn't be able to answer it.

You would have to do your own primary research and for this assignment you really won't be able to do that.

You have to use secondary research sources.

So, a good idea is to start with the secondary research sources and see what themes emerge.

For example, if we scroll through this list, we can see that many of the articles have to do with business and that might rule them out for us from the outset.

There is something here that has to do with instant photography and education as a therapy tool.

Here's another one about education.

We would need to go in look at the abstract and see what the actual article was discussing to see if that would be something that we want to turn into a research question for ourselves.

But here's a good example of an article that has to do more with cultural history and again you could get into the abstract and actually read the article to see is this something that I could turn into a research question?

Does this article give me any information that would help give me some themes that I could use as my question?

And that leads to tip 3.

Read your sources carefully to ensure they answer your research question.

There's no real secret involved with this tip.

As I mentioned earlier, the sources you use may not actually relate to your research question at all.

It's always a good idea to read your sources carefully and thoroughly to avoid this problem, and you may find that this helps you to refine your final question.

So to recap: start your search early; start with a broad search on your topic, and; make sure you read your sources carefully to see if they answer your research question or not.

Thanks for watching and if you have any questions please feel free to contact me.