
Introduction

Welcome to the *Basic Library Research Handbook*. This handbook is one of your principle resources for learning the basics about library research. It will provide a foundation needed to begin your research in the library, as well as to learn more advanced research methods.

Why a handbook

The library is an excellent place to begin your research. It is one of the few places where information has been organized in a systematic manner to meet the needs of researchers. This handbook will help you understand the context of your research and the role that libraries play.

Becoming proficient at library research is a great start to becoming information literate! This handbook can help you avoid some common research problems by helping you learn to:

- ✓ be prepared
- ✓ know your way around
- ✓ plan
- ✓ analyze your information needs
- ✓ estimate the scope of your research needs
- ✓ use the right tools to find information
- ✓ evaluate the quality of information
- ✓ document your work

You are likely to be a busy person and do not have enough time to get things done. Thus, you want to know how to approach and organize your research in the most effective manner. This handbook is filled with tried-and-proven recommendations for basic library research.

An overview

This handbook is organized into three parts, each covering a major area of research. The chapters within each part cover specific topics in detail. There are also a number of appendixes, a glossary, and a bibliography. Here is a summary of what you will find in each part.

Part I. Preparing yourself for library research introduces you to what you need to know to start your library research and how to avoid common pitfalls.

Part II. Finding information introduces you to finding books, articles, and other information. There are two major concepts you will learn through finding books and articles. You will first learn the use of *catalogs* to find books and second learn the use of *indexes* to find magazine and journal articles. Finding "other information" covers basic categories of reference tools and the World Wide Web to find additional information.

Part III. Evaluating and documenting information introduces you to basic questions to ask while evaluating information. Making sure you have reliable information from reliable sources is an important part of research and life skills. Documenting your work and citing your sources, in turn, is your way to demonstrate that *your* research is honest and reliable.

A note to students

You can use this handbook in one of three ways:

- ✓ If you want a crash course in library research, read it cover-to-cover. Reading the whole handbook helps you understand the major research concepts and gets you thinking about your research needs in a comprehensive way. The workshop section of each chapter provides suggested activities to reinforce what you have learned.
- ✓ If you want to find out about a specific aspect of research, such as developing a search strategy, finding articles, or evaluating information, you can turn to that section and get your answers quickly.
- ✓ As a paperweight!

This handbook is basic enough for a novice to be introduced to the principle issues in library research. But advanced researchers will be reminded about the major strategies and identify areas for improvement. Save your *Basic Library Research Handbook* for future reference.

A note to instructors

The handbook is intended to be an introduction to library research, exposing students to the concepts and skills necessary to find information using the appropriate tools. The handbook is an alternative to library classroom instruction. It is self-paced and intended to be a resource to which a student can turn for library research methods. Instructors may want to assign or recommend this handbook to students in class.

Handbooks

For online copies of the handbook, see:

— <http://www.hawaii.edu/emailref/instruction/blrh/>

Activities for students

The Workshop section at the end of each chapter provides suggested activities and questions that require students to use the knowledge and skills presented in that chapter of the handbook. You may also want to develop your own activities or examples that best suit the topics or areas of research for your students.