

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMM 498E

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Gathering scholarly information on any subject, particularly historical subjects, first of all involves making use of materials that have already been identified by other scholars. At more advanced levels of research, one finds and makes use of heretofore unidentified primary sources, but for this assignment, you will do best to begin by gathering materials that are already referenced by others. This does not mean that you will not want to find and use primary sources, but that you should make use of secondary sources to find these works.

You should begin your search with the easiest materials to locate and proceed to the more difficult materials. That means, search for books and reference sources first, proceed to periodicals and newspaper articles, and finally look at other less well indexed materials often found in microform; however, you need not slavishly follow this sequence. If a book gives you a citation for something that is part of a microform collection, there is no need to search periodicals before looking into the microform. Follow the *trail of citations* that quickly and easily gets you to what looks like the best materials.

If you start with a book, you will need to read it wisely: read the table of contents and introduction and possibly the first paragraphs of specific chapters to get an idea about what part(s) of the book you need to examine carefully in order to get what you need from it. Always follow the book's notes and look over its bibliography for other interesting titles.

BOOKS

Your first source for finding books is the USMAI Catalog. You can search the entire Catalog or limit your search to materials at UMCP. If you request a book from another campus in the USMAI system, it will take a few days to get here. So begin your research early. Begin by using the Keyword Search to find books that appear to be valuable to you. Once you find a book that is promising, examine the full record for that book to identify Subject Headings that will lead you to other books that are like the one that is valuable. Keep in mind that books with a similar main Subject Heading are classified using the same call number "root," i.e., the letters and numbers that appear before the period in the call number. This practice means that other books on your topic will be shelved next to ones you have identified in the catalog.

Your second source for books is WorldCat. This is available in Research Port. It is a database that combines library catalogs from all over the world, particularly North American libraries. Items that you find in WorldCat will have links to our local USMAI catalog to let you know if we have them. It will also let you know what libraries in our area have a copy of the items you find. You can request books that we don't own via Interlibrary Loan.

WorldCat is a “proprietary database,” meaning that you can get access to it only via Research Port; however, the producers of WorldCat have created a free search tool called worldcat.org. This will give you most of the capability that the proprietary database gives you. Plus, it will list the libraries that have the item, arranging them according to the distance they from you. (Worldcat.org reads your IP address and determines what city you’re in and lists results accordingly.) The URL for worldcat.org is the same as the name of the tool.

Your third source for books is Google Books. This tool is available from Google’s advanced search screen. Google Books allows you to search the full text of books that Google has in its database. Many publishers are providing Google with electronic copies of their books and several major research libraries are allowing Google to scan and include older “out of copyright” books. Because Google Books searches the full text, it allows you to find books that the cataloging record would not allow you to find. In some cases, you will be able to read these books on line. In other cases, you will only be able to see a few pages or just the citation for the book. Once you have identified a book in Google Books, you can use other tools to find out where you can get it.

OTHER REFERENCE SOURCES

There are numerous reference books available to use as a starting place for historical research. In particular, general and specialized encyclopedias are well worth examining. Two important titles are *The Dictionary of American Biography* and *American Decades*; however, others can easily be found by searching the Catalog. These will include encyclopedias for very specialized fields of study. Use the advanced search screen and limit your search to McKeldin’s reference collection. There are some general encyclopedias online, but you’ll be better off by coming to McKeldin and spending a few hours working with the print encyclopedias. Encyclopedia articles usually contain bibliographic references that will lead you to other valuable materials.

PERIODICAL ARTICLES

There are two ways you will access journal articles: (1) from complete citations for the articles that you have found in a bibliography and (2) through searching a database. If you have the complete citation, you can search our catalog by periodical title. If we have an electronic copy the journal volume and issue that you need, the catalog will link you to the full text. If we have a print copy, you are likely to find it in the “periodical stacks.” Again, the Catalog will tell you this.

The journals list in Research Port will allow you to browse any journal that we receive electronically.

The second method for getting at the journal literature is to search in a database. You will do this if you don’t have a known item to find, but are doing general research on a topic. Use Research Port to find databases that are likely to be useful to you; however, for this assignment, I will recommend several (in no particular order.) Note that many of

these databases do not contain materials published prior to the 1980s. You can usually find out what time period the database covers by clicking on a link on the database's front page.

Potentially Useful Databases:

- Communication and Mass Media Complete
- Academic Search Premier
- America: History and Life
- Periodicals Index Online
- American Periodicals Series
- Hispanic American Periodicals Index
- African American Newspapers
- JSTOR
- NY Times Historical
- Washington Post Historical

There are also a couple print indexes that you should look at. These should be particularly helpful for finding articles published in popular magazines. They are available in the reference collection on the first floor of McKeldin Library.

- Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
- 19th Century Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature

MICROFORM

As you are doing your research, you will eventually run into citations to older newspaper articles and other special items. Many of these items will be found in microform (microfilm or microfiche). Our microform collection is kept in the Current Periodicals Room on the first floor of McKeldin. To find newspaper articles on microform, simply search the Catalog to be sure that we own a copy of the newspaper issue you need. If the catalog record indicates that it is in microform, copy down the call number and find it in the Current Periodicals Room. There are microform readers there which are connected to printers (and e-mailers) for you to save your results for later examination.

Along with newspapers, the Libraries have large microform collections (microform sets) containing materials you will want to access. For example, the collected papers of Thomas Jefferson. To access these materials, go to the Libraries' list of microform collection indexes at http://www.lib.umd.edu/MICROFORMS/micro_list.html. Browse the list until you see something that matches the citation you have or looks to be of interest. The hot link in the list will show you how to find the index that will help you find the material within the microform set you need.

SPECIAL TOOLS

There are a few special tools that will help you manage the bibliographic references that you collect in the course of your work. They are My Account, My Research Port, and My EBSCOhost.

(1) To use My Account, simple log in to My Account from the Catalog's front page. Then as you do your searching, you can check the box next to any reference that you would like to save, and it will be saved in your My Account folder. There are other fancier features of My Account that you can learn to use with a little experimentation, but saving bibliographic items is probably the most important feature in My Account.

(2) To use My Research Port, log in to My Research Port from Research Port's front page, then, while you are using the "Quick search in a few databases" feature, check the boxes related to the items you want to save in your My Research Port folder.

You are not restricted to using only the "Quick search" that the Libraries have created for everyone to use. You also can create your own set of databases to search simultaneously. To do this follow these simple steps:

- (i) Go to the database list and click on "add to lists" for the database you want to include in your group of databases to search.
- (ii) Go to My Lists and click My Databases.
- (iii) Click on "create new group."
- (iv) Name the group.
- (v) "Move" databases from the clipboard into the new group.

If you do this, you will find that when you log into My Research Port, the customized list of databases that you placed in your database group will be an option in the "Quick search in a few databases" feature.

(3) My EBSCOhost allows you to do various helpful things, including saving results from you searches, saving searches, setting up automated searches, and journal "alerts." To do this, you must create a My EBSCOhost account. You can do this from any EBSCOhost database. Simply click on "Sign into My EBSCOhost," then click on "I'm a new user," and follow the directions.

The simplest and perhaps most useful tool in My EBSCOhost is saving the results of your searches. To do this simply

- (i) Conduct a search while you are logged in.
- (ii) When you get your results click on the "add to folder" link.
- (iii) To view what you have saved, click on "folder" at the top of the page.

You can also program EBSCOhost to conduct a search periodically that you design yourself.

- (i) Conduct a search while you are logged in.

- (ii) Click on “Alert/Save/Share.”
- (iii) Click on “Create an alert.”
- (iv) Fill out the form to specify when and how often the search will be conducted.

If you do this, you periodically will receive an e-message telling you that EBSCOhost has added records to their database that match your search parameters. It is a great way to effortlessly repeat a valuable search in the database whenever the database is updated.

OTHER CITATION MANAGEMENT TOOLS

My Account, My Research Port, and My EBSCOhost are useful, but they cannot match the power of specialized citation management tools like ProCite, Endnote, RefWorks, and Zotero. For information on how to use ProCite and Endnote go to “Downloading References from Library Databases” at <http://www.lib.umd.edu/ETC/bmsdatabases.html>. For information about how to use RefWorks, go to “RefWorks: Online Tool for Managing Citations” at <http://www.lib.umd.edu/PUBSERV/refworks/>. For information about using Zotero go to <http://www.zotero.org>. Zotero is a free, open source software tool that has been receiving very good reviews lately. I have not used it, so I cannot personally recommend it, but you might want to try it out.