

# SC Library Research Assignment

...adapted from "Piece of Junk," by Nick Proctor

The goal of this assignment is to hone your skills in using library resources for research, focusing on your ability to create good "search terms," use databases, and (most importantly) know what to do with what you find. These skills are part of *information literacy*.

With better skills, time spent in research and writing in future classes will be more efficient and the work you do will be of higher quality. You may even find you like doing research because it *challenges* you and lets you study an interest area in much more depth.

By the end of today, you should better understand:

- Differences in quality between types of information sources from database/online searches
- How to target and refine your searches (using keywords/search terms) to get better results
- The depth of books and journal articles, compared to a cursory Wikipedia or Google search
- How to evaluate the accuracy of Internet-only sources

## 1<sup>st</sup> Step: TOPIC & SEARCH TERMS

Let's use your assigned oral presentation ("seminar leadership") topic. I ask you in the seminar to bring in *at least 3 sources outside the text*. First, let's brainstorm search terms you will use to look for sources.

### Sample TERMS/KEYWORDS

TOPIC = \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: LOCATE LEGIT SOURCES!

In this assignment, I ask you to find 4 different types of sources that you could use in your presentation. Let's start with a book related to your topic. Thankfully, the **ENCORE** "all-in-one" search engine shows you whether a search finding is a book, article, etc. **Write author/title/source/date on the line below:**

- A. **Book** – *once you find the book's citation, please dig into the stacks to locate/skim the book.*  
*\*\*\*Because books deal with broad topics, you may have to use more generic search terms!*

\_\_\_\_\_

Next, let's look for a scholarly journal article. The key to what makes a journal "scholarly" is both its author (an academic/researcher, not a journalist) and the fact that it is "peer reviewed." *This means the work was judged excellent by a double-blind panel of experts in the field.* What's great about the **ENCORE** system is that on the left-hand you can sort findings and limit a list to PEER-REVIEWED work.

- B. **Scholarly article** – *once you find a citation, pull up PDF or full text. If the library doesn't have full text / PDF available (some list only abstracts, i.e. summaries), try to find a full text article.*

Note how the format of a scholarly journal differs from a popular magazine or a newspaper.

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- C. **Popular (or non-peer reviewed) article: EXAMPLES include newsmagazines, newspapers, and legitimate "scholarly" material online** – *please find the first citation in this category using ENCORE. Then find a second citation in GOOGLE.*

[#1] \_\_\_\_\_

[#2] \_\_\_\_\_

- D. **"Piece of junk"** – Use Google to find something you think fits the bill. List the source below.

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How did you **know** it was junk? Was it just because you found it *online*, or some more specific reason? Is it a biased source, incomplete, editable (wiki), or what?

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What signs or characteristics tell you something is **legitimate**? List these below!

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<p><b>Reflection:</b> Turn in this sheet by Friday. <u>Print/attach</u> the bad source so we can talk about: (1) the worst sources we found, (2) how to be better junk detectors, and (3) WHY some students rely on bad sources.</p>
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