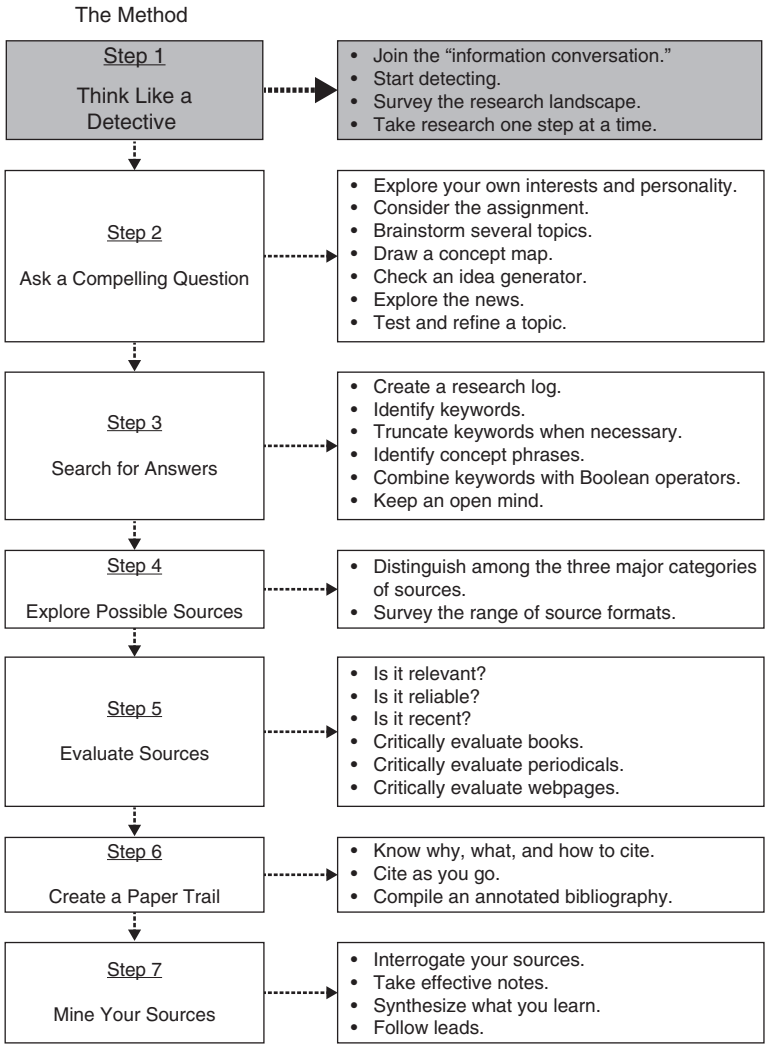
Part I

The Method

1

Think Like a Detective



Introduction to Information Literacy for Students, First Edition. Michael C. Alewine and Mark Canada.

Chapter Summary

Prepare to become a master of information, the most powerful tool on earth. In this chapter, we welcome you to the two sides of the "information conversation": hearing and making yourself heard. We will make the case for both information literacy—the ability to find, evaluate, and use information—and research, a kind of detective work that can be every bit as fascinating and exciting as the investigations we love to watch on television and in movie theaters.

Key Terms: research, information literacy, text, visual literacy, media literacy, academic libraries, librarian

Chapter Objectives

- Describe the role of information and research in the "Information Age."
- Identify the various components of information literacy and their connection to academic research.
- Describe other literacies that are important for carrying out academic research.
- Explain the connection between academic research and libraries.

Information: The Key to Just about Everything

When you hear the word *information*, what comes to mind? Thrills and chills? Success and failure? Life and death? Consider the following:

- The FBI, CIA, and other law-enforcement agencies employ thousands of experts who put their information skills to work to track down missing persons, abducted children, and criminal suspects.
- Coaches of college and professional teams depend on information—about their own players' strengths and weaknesses, as well as the assets and liabilities of their opponents—to win games.
- Before a film's release, researchers behind the scenes deploy their information skills to discover details—of explosives, fashion, language, and more—that will make the movie pop on the silver screen.

Every field—including the one you will choose if you pursue a career—thrives on information, and the people who can find, evaluate, and use it are the ones who will make the difference between success and failure, victory and defeat, even life and death.

This book can help you make a difference. By giving you the knowledge, strategies, and tools you need to master information, it will empower you to solve crimes, win games, make movies, whatever you want to do. You will learn the valuable skill (and fascinating endeavor) of **research**, a process that all of the occupations mentioned above—and hundreds of others—use to find answers to questions. Along the way, you will learn how to mine sources for clues, follow leads, conduct interviews, collect and manage various kinds of intelligence, and turn it into the kind of knowledge that can move people, organizations, and whole nations. In short, you will learn to deploy information, the most powerful tool in the world, to do great things.

In this chapter, we will help you master the first step, which is to adopt a research mindset:

1 Join the "information conversation."
2 Start detecting.
3 Survey the research landscape, particularly libraries and the online world.
4 Take research one step at a time.

Now let's begin by bringing you into the information conversation.

Insider's Tip: Winners Use Research

Research is vitally important for any professional coach. I have spent many hours researching opponents' tendencies so I can give my players the best chance to compete. I study the kind of defenses these opponents play throughout the game or what offensive sets they are going to run, and I use statistics to establish which opposing players are very good shooters and which ones aren't. This kind of research is invaluable for my players. For example, it can assist them during the game if they know the player they are guarding is an effective outside shooter or not. We also watch film of opponents to get a sense of their strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies. Research also helps me set my lineups. For example, if I learn that an opponent tends to use a zone defense, I might favor players who are strong outside shooters.

Research helps me to understand my own players, too. I use statistics to gauge their success in various areas. This research starts at the beginning of the season and continues all the way until the end. By tracking the ebbs and flows of shooting percentage, free throw percentage, rebounds per game, deflections, and more throughout a season, I get a sense of where players need to improve and can, in turn, develop appropriate training regimens. For example, if statistics show that players are shooting poorly at the ends of games, I might incorporate certain kinds of conditioning and shooting drills into practice.

> Finally, research is a tool for skill improvement in general. When I coach youth players, I look for challenging, enjoyable drills that develop fundamentals. I often develop my own drills, but I also spend a lot of time researching drills that other coaches have used and found effective.
>
> –Mike Oppland, professional basketball player (Black Star Mersch, Luxembourg) and youth basketball coach

Join the Information Conversation

You probably have heard the expression "There's no sense in reinventing the wheel." Over the thousands of years humans have been on earth, they have figured out a few things, from how to build a fire to how to put satellites into space and use them to track people on the ground. Thanks to the ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras, we can calculate the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle if we know the lengths of the other two sides. Biologist James Watson and physicist Francis Crick discovered the structure of DNA. Others, through their own research, have revolutionized the way we think about economics, education, psychology, and other fields.

Imagine what life would be like if we lost all of this information. We would have to, well, reinvent the wheel—as well as the telephone, the airplane, the computer, and millions of other devices. We also would have to recount, recalculate, reimagine everything humans have ever known. All this re-ing would take a lot of time and energy, and we might not get everything right this time. When people begin to plan a job or design a product or complete any other complex task without first determining what already is known about it, they are putting themselves in a similar position, setting themselves up to waste time and energy and possibly fail because they don't have the information that others already have discovered or developed. They are, essentially, working in an empty room instead of one filled with knowledgeable experts.

Successful people know better. Rather than going it alone, they get in on the exchange of information that goes on every hour of every day. Some people call it the "information conversation." Imagine a gigantic room filled with people—professors, lab researchers, doctors, engineers, athletes and coaches, journalists, politicians, police officers, parents, people with every kind of degree and job and personal experience—all talking, sharing what they know about history, science, medicine, technology, sports, news, politics, crime, children, and hundreds of other subjects. You could learn a lot in this room, couldn't you? Gatherings like this one—but on a smaller scale and on a narrower group of subjects—actually occur frequently and go by the name of **conferences**. Thanks to all the forms of communication we have, though, we don't need to be in the same room to exchange facts and ideas. The information conversation can take place around the clock in the form of email, social media posts, Tweets, blogs and vlogs, YouTube videos, podcasts, newspaper and

magazine articles, books, radio talk shows, television documentaries, and dozens of other forms of communication.

Science, politics, sports, and all those other subjects are complex. Sometimes the experts in the room can provide clear answers, but sometimes they don't know the answers, and sometimes they don't agree about the answers. Let's face it: information, though crucial, is not always a definite quantity. Ever since Sigmund Freud invented modern psychology, various scientists have offered different theories for human thought and behavior. Interpreters of art, music, sculpture, and literature regularly offer different ways of understanding these forms of expression. Even science and mathematics, sometimes thought of as disciplines where there are "right" and "wrong" answers and less room for interpretation, have any number of ways of approaching or explaining the same phenomena. In all of these fields and others, theories and interpretations abound, sometimes merely existing side by side and other times contradicting one another.

Because the voices in this room are so many and so varied, it often can be difficult to make sense of all the conversation, but the important thing is to be in the room. "The man who does not read good books," Mark Twain said, "has no advantage over the man who can't read them." The same is true of all information. When you can *and do* use information, you have power. It's easy to join the conversation. Anyone with Internet access and a computer can create a blog or a vlog, comment on YouTube videos and news articles, contribute to Wikipedia articles, and create and manage their own websites. You don't have to be a professor or a lab scientist to attend a conference or publish your work: many college students, in fact, present information in conferences and publications designed for undergraduates. In this large and open conversation, you don't have to convince a magazine editor or an acquisitions editor at a publishing company that you have something worthwhile to say (and the ability to say it in a clear, engaging way) to have a voice in the room. You can just start talking!

Of course, having the opportunity to talk does not guarantee that anyone will be listening, especially since some people in the room—because of money, access, or status—always seem to be carrying microphones and amplifiers. For example, a billionaire can buy television or Internet ads that would not be affordable for most of us. Owners of radio stations and other media outlets, people who work in the media, and people who have friends in the media business are likely to have an easier time expressing their views in commentaries or shaping the news and other information going out to the public. Finally, politicians, celebrities, and even less well-known leaders in noteworthy positions, because of their status, have a kind of "bully pulpit" they can use to command attention. (President Theodore Roosevelt famously used this term to express a president's influence in the public sphere: when a president talks, people listen.)

This information conversation has both pros and cons. Access means that everyone, including you, can have a say, but it also means that you have to be careful, since some of the speakers may not be reliable. The system does privilege "insiders," providing a degree of quality control, but this same feature can be a disadvantage if you

are not one of those insiders. In this book, you will learn to make the most of the system. For example, you will learn ways to evaluate the information you encounter so that you will not be easily taken in by unreliable voices. You also will find here dozens of tools and strategies that will help you to think, work, and communicate like an insider. When you're done, you will be able to enter the room, join the information conversation, and feel right at home.

Quicktivity: The Information Conversation Online

Use the metaphor of the information conversation to explain the kind of information exchange that takes place online—via Twitter or Tumblr, for example. Who gets to talk? What kinds of factors shape the conversation?

You can't help but notice this conversation. It's everywhere, from conferences to libraries to little screens on pumps at the gas station. (They don't call it the "Information Age" for nothing.) All of us encounter information on a daily, even an hourly basis, whether we are checking out classes and professors, shopping for a cell phone or a car, considering political candidates, or making any number of other decisions. Even if we are not consciously setting out to make a specific decision, we are using information to broaden and deepen our understanding of current events, as well as timeless questions about free will, our place in the world, and more. If air, food, and water are the keys to basic survival, information is the key to just about everything else: safety, enrichment, entertainment, comfort, progress. Consider war, poverty, hunger, oppression, intolerance, and disease. How many of these problems could be alleviated through better understanding?

Information, though, is only as good as our ability to make sense of it and deploy it to make progress—thus the case for **information literacy**, which the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defines as "the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information." Information comes in a variety of forms, especially in the digital age. Because language is so important to humans, **text**—that is, the words and sentences found in books and other documents—has long been the dominant means for storing and conveying information; however, thanks in part to the rise of the Internet since the 1990s, images and sounds now form important parts of the world of stored information. For this reason, information literacy involves the ability to find, evaluate, and use not only books and articles, but also YouTube videos, podcasts, images posted on social media sites, and more. Some people and organizations use different terms, such as **visual literacy** or **media literacy**, for the skills involved in working with these various kinds of sources. For example, the ACRL uses the term *visual literacy* for skills involving working with images, and the National Association for Media Literacy Education explains that *media literacy* involves the skills of retrieving, analyzing, evaluating, and conveying both printed and digital

information. In this book, *information literacy* is a general term for finding, evaluating, and using all kinds of information, including textual, visual, and audio material, as well as information stored in printed or digital formats.

In any conversation, information flows in two directions. Information-literate people know how to make sense of all the talk around them, but they also can make worthwhile contributions to the conversation. They can use the information they hear, find additional information, and put it all together to say things that will help other people to understand technology, art, politics, education, or another subject. In other words, they know how to do research—which, as you will see, is really a kind of detective work.

Think Fast: Information Literacy

Define *information literacy* in your own words.

Start Detecting

For many people, *research* is an ugly word, something that conjures up images of confusing articles and desks littered with paper, as well as feelings of boredom, anger, and frustration. Mention the word *investigate* or *detective*, on the other hand, and you often will get a much more enthusiastic response. Millions of people have spent millions of hours watching detective shows such as *NCIS*, *CSI*, *CSI-Miami*, *CSI-New York*, *CSI-Cyber*, *Forensic Files*, *The X-Files*, *The Dresden Files*, *The Rockford Files*, and a few hundred other shows, even some that don't have *C*, *S*, *I*, or *Files* in their titles. In fact, many college chemistry and criminal justice professors will tell you that the *CSI* shows alone have inspired many students to study their subjects. Countless people will rush to watch a detective show or movie, play an investigative videogame, read a murder mystery, or earn a degree with the hope of becoming detectives themselves, but many of these same people will move even faster to dodge anything clearly labeled "research." Investigation is often seen as a form of recreation, one for which people will pay good money, while research is viewed as drudgery, something many would—if they could—pay to avoid.

What's the difference?

In terms of purpose and process, there is no difference. Both detectives (FBI agents, police investigators, forensic scientists) and other kinds of researchers (geologists, historians, psychologists) seek answers to questions, and they study evidence to find those answers. For detectives, the evidence consists of physical objects (traces of DNA, fingerprints, murder weapons), testimony (from eyewitnesses and experts), and paper and electronic documents (financial records, email correspondence, handwritten notes). For other kinds of researchers, the evidence includes—you guessed it—physical objects (artifacts such as paintings and buildings),

testimony (from scholars), and documents (books, articles, letters, webpages). In fact, many detectives and other researchers use exactly the same kinds of evidence, particularly manuscripts, government statistics, and scientific reports.

As you can see, investigation and research are the same things. Both involve finding answers, something that appeals to a natural curiosity that all humans have. In fact, every person who has ever lived has been curious about something. The proof is right there in their behavior as children, who are constantly reaching out to touch things and repeatedly asking their parents "Why?" So how did research get such a bad rap? We have a few ideas:

1 Many people don't see research as investigation and thus don't engage their curiosities.
2 In school, students often feel forced to explore topics that don't interest them.
3 Most students don't have a straightforward, logical method for conducting research, so they wind up spending too much time finding too little good information to earn too-low grades, ultimately feeling angry, frustrated, and disappointed.

Are you ready for some good news? Here goes:

1 This book approaches research as a form of investigation (sometimes using detectives and forensic scientists as examples), often describing it in a way that captures the elements that make detective work so interesting: the captivating questions, the clever strategies, the thrilling car chases—no, scratch the car chases; they were going to take us over budget!
2 Research is most engaging—and most successful—when people try to answer questions about the things that interest them. The next chapter, in fact, offers several tips for exploring your own interests and either turning them into research questions or finding just the right angles on course assignments so that you can tailor them around your interests or your personality.
3 This book presents a step-by-step method that makes the research process both manageable and effective.

The goal is to help you become not only an effective researcher, but also an enthusiastic one, someone who sees bits of information as interesting, valuable clues that can help us satisfy our own natural curiosities.

Quicktivity: Compare Research and Investigation

Find the definitions of *research* and *investigate* and compare them. What do you notice? Now, reflect on how you found the definition of each word. Does what you did count as research? Explain.

While detectives and other researchers have a lot in common, detectives' goals tend to be narrow and immediate: the identity of a thief, the location of an abducted child, the time of a criminal plot. Detectives usually are trying to answer the questions that begin with *Who*, *Where*, or *When*. On the other hand, biologists, political scientists, linguists, and other scholars engaged in what we call academic research ask broad questions that don't require an immediate answer. Often their questions begin with *Why* or *How* (although some do begin with *Who*, *Where*, and *When*, as well as *What* and *How many*). These researchers, you might say, are often concerned with the "big" or "deep" questions, and their answers help to create the information we use to understand our world, from its nature to its politics to its languages and beyond. In doing so, they often pursue answers just because they want to *know*. They're curious—like you. You wonder about things, don't you? How do people fall in love (and how can I get this incredible person I just met to fall in love with me)? Can we adequately feed everyone in the world? Are we alone in the universe? Why do so many analog watches in advertisements read 10:10? (They really do. See for yourself.)

Academic research is just another way to understand—that is, to use information to get a better grasp on some aspect of our world or our experience. Researchers, whether they are professionals or students, start with an idea, search for information about that idea, and use information they find to expand our understanding of some aspect of the world. Your immediate motivation in college may be to earn a stellar grade on an assignment or to earn a degree, but research also will help you do much more. You will develop skills that will enable you to make meaningful, useful contributions in the information conversation and ultimately to help us all understand the world and ourselves better.

Think Fast: The Purpose of Research

Why do people conduct research?

Now, if you reflect on your own attempts to make sense of things, you probably will agree that understanding can be a messy, chaotic process. When you went on that first date, you probably didn't bring a list of interview questions (and, if you did, you probably didn't have to worry about scheduling a second date). Still, you also may have noticed that *some* order does help when you are seeking to understand. When you want to make Swedish crepes, you don't start by researching the geography of Sweden or the history of crepes. You start with the basics. You also go to the people who know about cooking, not just the first person you bump into on the street. You buy the ingredients. You try to be careful when you mix them. If you are serious about getting those crepes right, you try again and refine your steps. Maybe you seek out someone else who knows about cooking, or you try some different ingredients. In other words, you follow a rough *method* for understanding.

Research works the same way—or, at least, it should. In this book, we outline, step by step, a very effective method for understanding things through research. It still will be messy at times, as detective work often is, but following this process will make the entire experience easier, less frustrating, more satisfying, and more productive. In fact, if you have ever tried to conduct research the way a lot of people do—haphazardly and superficially, that is—you may be amazed how manageable research is when you follow this method.

As a student, you often will have the opportunity not only to think like a researcher, but also to work like one. In many of your courses, your instructors will expect you to investigate the same kinds of questions that they themselves—as scientists, historians, management experts, and scholars of everything from art to zoology—do in their work outside the classroom. Sometimes, you may do your research in a laboratory. Other times, you will work in a library environment—either a physical library (with shelves and books) or a virtual library (with digital information you can access from home with your laptop or mobile device). In college, you probably will work in or with **academic libraries**, the kind of well-stocked libraries found on campuses and used by serious researchers. In still other cases, you may collect information from the world around you through observations and interviews, as well as close studies of social media, images, and other kinds of sources. After finding, interpreting, and assembling your information, you will share your findings with your instructor or classmates in a research paper, presentation, blog, vlog, podcast, or some other form. In short, your success in college depends largely on your ability to find, evaluate, and use information, including the kind found in physical and virtual libraries, as well as the kind that exist all around you—on Twitter and Tumblr, in images and recordings made by both amateurs and professionals, even in objects you can observe and people you can interview.

Sound overwhelming? Relax. Research is challenging, but the process is certainly manageable (as this book will show you), and often it's exhilarating. It's a way to satisfy your curiosity—and help your fellow human beings make a better world. After all, information makes progress possible, and who doesn't want progress?

Insider's Tip: Become an Expert

In colleges and universities across the country, students are exploring topics that interest them, developing expertise, and even presenting and publishing their work. Student research, in fact, is a point of focus for many institutions, including both of the ones where I have worked in recent years. As an English professor who has worked with thousands of students, I have seen some of them become experts in specific areas, such as Thomas Wolfe's drama or Truman Capote's nonfiction novel, and I have sometimes asked them to talk to one of my classes or even just asked them for some information—just as I would ask a professional colleague. Why wouldn't I? In the course of their research,

these students have developed their own expertise. In their niche areas, they sometimes know more than I do.

You can be this kind of student, too. After all, there's a lot of ground to cover out there, not only in the study of Wolfe and Capote, but also in countless niches in art history, astronomy, finance, psychology, criminal justice, and other disciplines. There's room enough for every one of us to become an expert in something.

–Mark

Survey the Research Landscape

The Internet has made research much easier than it once was, even to the point where some people may think that finding information is as easy as googling it and reading the first page that comes up on the results page. Want to know the percentage of nitrogen in the earth's atmosphere? Google it. Need some tips on fielding a ground ball? Watch a video on YouTube. Interested in some expert commentary on the effects that the Panic of 1837 had on the book-publishing industry? Hmmm. Try googling that information, and you might not be so lucky. Until now, you may not have worried too much about understanding this kind of thing, but the kinds of information challenges you will face in college, in your job, and in other aspects of your life (as a citizen, as a parent, as a coach) often involve questions not easily answered with a Google search.

Part of the problem is that vast amounts of information are simply not available on the public form of the Internet and thus not accessible through Google or any other public search engine. (Google, through projects such as Google Scholar, is trying to expand the amount of information publicly available on the Internet, but this work may take a while, particularly because of limits imposed by copyright law.) Furthermore, because anyone with Internet access can post information there without submitting it to be checked or edited, much of this information is subject to error or is just plain confusing.

The Internet—along with Google and the many other companies involved with shaping the way we use it—is evolving, and we eventually will be able to find most or even all of the information we need there. Until that time, which may be many years away, true information literacy—the kind that you will need to succeed during and after college—requires that you be able to find, evaluate, and use not only information available on the Internet, but also information stored in and by libraries in the form of books, periodicals, government documents, and other kinds of printed and digital media. Fortunately for you and the rest of the world's researchers, these libraries employ information specialists—called, of course, **librarians**—who understand the common systems for organizing information and can help you find what you need. In fact, many large academic libraries have librarians who specialize in

particular subject areas, or disciplines. Both general and specialist librarians keep on top of new sources of information, changes to databases, and specific Web-based resources. They can suggest useful research strategies such as using descriptors, keywords, and subject headings—although you may need little or no help with such tools after you finish reading this book! In short, librarians can help you with all aspects of the academic research process. Help them help you by setting up appointments for research consultations well in advance of due dates. Bring your syllabus, descriptions of assignments, and notes from meetings with your instructors.

Take Research One Step at a Time

"Where do I start?" Librarians hear this question all the time—not just from anxious first-year college students, but from experienced seniors, graduate students, even professors. Research starts with an idea, ideally one that interests you, and then becomes a process of discovery. Remember, research is a way of understanding. Starting with a topic you want to explore or a question you want to answer, you will gather information from a variety of sources—from webpages to books to interviews with experts—to deepen your understanding. Along the way, as you study the information you find, you will think about how that information relates to your initial thought or start moving in a different direction. In the end, if you are successful, you will have expanded your understanding of your topic *and* produced something, such as a paper or presentation, that will expand others' understanding, as well; thus, your product will become a new source of information for others to use.

That's the general direction that research takes. It sounds pretty murky, doesn't it? How exactly are you supposed to come up with that first idea? Where can you find the best information? How do you study the information, draw out the relevant parts, and use them in your own project? Let's face it: if you don't know what you're doing, information can be intimidating, research can be frustrating, and the entire experience of trying to find and use information can be confusing, even maddening.

It doesn't have to be that way. This book describes a step-by-step method for working with information, one that makes the research process manageable, effective, and satisfying. This book will take you through this method one step at a time. By the time you finish this chapter, you will have completed the first step, which is to think like a detective. The next six chapters describe the rest of the seven steps in the method:

2: Ask a Compelling Question
3: Search for Answers
4: Explore Possible Sources
5: Evaluate Sources
6: Create a Paper Trail
7: Mine Your Sources

Each of these chapters describes specific strategies you can use as you work through each step in the method. In the chapter on asking a compelling question, for

example, you will learn how to explore your own interests, consider the assignment, brainstorm ideas, draw a concept map, check an idea generator, explore the news, and test and refine a topic.

The chapters in the second half of the book provide you with everything you need to know to find and use specific kinds of sources:

8: Reference
9: Books
10: Periodicals
11: Statistics
12: Government Sources
13: Webpages
14: Other Sources

The order of these chapters aligns with the order you will want to explore each kind of source, at least while you are learning the ropes of research. For example, reference sources come first because the overviews, definitions, and bibliographies they contain make them the ideal places to start doing research on a topic. As you become a more experienced researcher, you may wind up exploring sources in a different order—checking out government sources before books, for example—but this order serves as a basic way to approach the wide variety of sources available to you.

The final chapter offers several ideas of how you can use what you have learned in the book to conduct research in other courses, on the job, and in your personal and civic lives.

Each chapter begins with an overview (featuring a chapter summary, terms, and objectives) and then walks you through specific strategies for completing a step in the research process or exploring a specific kind of source. Other features—including Think Fast questions, Quicktivities, tips from insiders such as a detective and a basketball coach, examples from various disciplines, images of online resources, and Steps to Success—provide opportunities to review what you have learned, witness strategies and tools at work, and apply the strategies you are learning to a particular research project.

You already have seen one of our Quicktivities. Below is another. Use these exercises, along with the "Think Fast" questions and "Steps to Success" at the end of this chapter, to review and apply what you already have learned about information literacy and research.

Quicktivity: Compare the Internet and Libraries

In "Information Literacy Makes All the Wrong Assumptions," librarian Stanley Wilder argues that the typical first-year college student accustomed to the Internet might rightly fault libraries for their numerous interfaces and search

systems. If you have tried to find information on the Internet and through a library, compare your experiences. (If you have not, take a few minutes and try to find the same piece of information in both places.) Which resource, the Internet or the library, did you find easier to use? What would make either one easier to use?

Conclusion

As you know from reading this chapter, information literacy involves both taking in information (discovering and thinking) and producing it (doing) through research. Knowing how to understand and use information can improve every part of your life—from buying a car to parenting children to improving your community and the world. Perhaps this introduction has given you a new appreciation for the value of information and the various forms it takes, as well as an understanding of the concepts of information, visual, and media literacy. Maybe you are feeling a little more confident and comfortable with the research process, now that you know that it can be managed as a series of steps. The next chapter will walk you through the next step: asking a compelling question.

Steps to Success

1 Think of a specific time you needed information—when you were considering various colleges or shopping for a phone. Where did you get your information? What obstacles did you encounter, and how did you overcome them? Now that you have read this chapter, can you think of any things you would do differently? How so?
2 Look over the syllabi for your various courses and identify the research projects on the horizon in the coming weeks. Develop a plan for completing these projects, noting deadlines along the way. Include at least one meeting with each instructor and one meeting with a librarian.
3 Focus on one of your research projects and consider the various forms of information—webpages, books, articles, social media, podcasts, and more—mentioned in this introduction. How might you tap a wide variety of sources for a single project? For example, if you were researching the effects of texting on teenagers' driving, you might check out government statistics on traffic accidents linked to texting, listen to some online news reports, interview or survey several teen drivers, and perhaps even observe some of these drivers.

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