Tutorial #1: Find an article using a library database.

This Tutorial will guide you through the steps necessary to search for an article in one of the library databases. Most library databases have information on a specific field (such as business, criminal justice, or psychology) so which one you use may vary based on your topic, but the techniques used will be very similar.

Aside: Why not just search Google?

Library databases allow you to search for information that is more trustworthy and more targeted on your topic.

* Reliability
Information in library databases is almost always from a reliable source. Publishing on the internet so easy that a lot of bad information is posted, along with the good stuff. You need to spend more time making sure anything you find on the internet is reliable.
* Scope
Databases usually focus on a specific topic, making it easier to find results on your topic. For example, a search of “Java” in the Computer Database will not turn up many articles on coffee or Indonesia. On the Internet, you will get a lot more results that are off topic.
* Improved search functionality
Articles in library databases are assigned subject headings that can make it even easier to find articles on a topic. It is often hard to know what is the best word to use to find something, especially when multiple terms could be used. For example, when a writer refers to the United States of America, she may use any of the following terms: United States, United States of America, America, U.S. or USA. Which should you use to search? A database that uses subject heading will employ an indexer who might apply the subject “United States of America” to all articles about the USA. That way, you don’t have to worry about which variant the writer used.

Tutorial:

* Go to the Langsdale Home Page.
* Click on the Databases Link.
* Click on Business and Economic Databases
* Click on ABI/Inform
* Enter “soft drinks” as a search term.
* In the classification code box, search for a code about “market”.
* Select the code for article about market research.
* Run the search for “soft drinks” and CC “????”
* Find an article on your topic.

Now it is your turn. Find an article on the smart phone market….

Tutorial #2: Evaluating Resources

Would you rather use an article from the New Your Times or the Weekly World News? Hopefully this example is obvious, but in many cases it is not easy to distinguish between a reliable source and an unreliable one at first glance. This tutorial will give you a systematic method for thinking about whether you want to trust a website or not.

Things to consider:

1. Authority
Authority referrers to the expertise and reputation of the author and publisher.

One question to ask your self is who is the author? Is the author an expert in the field? Someone with a Ph.D. in a field or someone who has an established and verifiable track record in an area might be considered an expert and someone who one would expect to provide good information. A journalist or writer, especially one who has been covering a certain topic for an extended period of time, might be expected to have developed a certain level of expertise in an area as well. So knowledge of the subject matter is one aspect of authority.

Another key to authority is the publisher. Some journals are published by scholarly organizations. The audience for these journals is primarily other experts in the field. If the journal does not publish high quality content, they will lose their reputation and subscribers. The standards might not be quite as high for more popular magazines (Time, Rolling Stone, etc.) and most newspapers, but they still have a reputation to keep up. It is big news when a reporter from a major newspaper like the New York Times fabricates a story in part because people trust the newspaper to be factual.

2. Accuracy

3. Objectivity

4. Currency

5. Coverage