Lesson Plan: Choosing a Topic & Keywords

# Learning Objectives:

* Match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools
* Design and refine needs and search strategies as necessary, based on search results
* Understand how information systems (i.e., collections of recorded information) are organized to access relevant information

# BEFORE CLASS:

* **Enter research topics into the** [**Wheel of Names**](https://wheelofnames.com/)**.**

# INTRO (2 mins)

* Introduce ourselves
* **Outline of Instruction** for expectations of what we will cover today.
* Show the [MSU Library Research Guide](https://guides.lib.montana.edu/libraryresearch), where you can find this information and get help
* Introduce[**Wheel of Names**](https://wheelofnames.com/)**,** which will be used to discuss examples in class as well as for participants to select a topic for their in-class work. If using this lesson plan with students with chosen topics, then use this tool for in-class examples, then have students work on their chosen topic for in-class activities.

# DISCUSSION (15 mins)

* **TOGETHER: Review assignment guidelines** 
  + How many sources, peer-reviewed or not, background information, etc?
* Topic exploration with CatSearch
  + Example search with broad topic
  + Limit by subject area
  + Limit by subject area again – this can be used to get more ideas

# **ACTIVITY: Topic Exploration, part I & II**

# DISCUSSION (15 mins)

* **As a group:**
* **Research Topic: Spin the** [**Wheel of Names**](https://wheelofnames.com/) **for a topic**
* **Major concepts**
* **Broad keywords**
* **Synonyms**

# **ACTIVITY: Brainstorming Keywords**

# WRAP UP (5 mins)

* Get help & Additional resources on [**MSU Library Research Guide**](https://guides.lib.montana.edu/libraryresearch)
* Assessment of instruction session – [online survey](https://montana.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eCJiCWmwFY3DUTI) taken in class

# ADDITIONAL IN-CLASS or HOMEWORK RESOURCES:

* [**MSU Library Research Guide**](https://guides.lib.montana.edu/libraryresearch)
* [**MSU Library online tutorials:**](https://www.lib.montana.edu/services/research-and-instruction/tutorials.html)
* Suggested:
  + - 1. [**Identifying Keywords**](https://www.lib.montana.edu/services/research-and-instruction/tutorials/identifyingkeywords/story.html)
  + MSU Library Handouts
    - [Brainstorming Keywords](https://www.lib.montana.edu/services/research-and-instruction/meta/Salsbury_Brainstorming_Keywords_Search_Wksht.pdf)
* [**Credo Information Literacy Tutorials**](https://www.lib.montana.edu/services/research-and-instruction/tutorials.html#credo)
  + - Suggested:
      1. [Research Process and Choosing a Topic](https://vle.credoreference.com/montana-state-university-ilcm/7751/research-process-and-choosing-a-topic-section-module)
      2. [Reference and Searching Techniques](https://vle.credoreference.com/montana-state-university-ilcm/7751/reference-and-searching-techniques-section-module)
* [**Consortium of Academic & Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)**](https://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/pub-serv/instruction/InstructionShowcase#2021Worrell)
  + - Annual Instruction Showcase Archives
      1. Multiple lesson plans for teaching research
      2. Suggested:
         * [Keyword Development and Searching](http://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/pub-serv/instruction/InstructionShowcase#2014LenaghanWhitehead)
         * A Search Term By Any Other Name Is Just As Correct?: The Importance Of Evolving Language In Keywords And Subject Headings

Activity: Topic Exploration Worksheet

# A guide to help you:

* Identify topics of interest
* Brainstorm keywords and synonyms to use as search terms
* Conduct preliminary research on a topic

# PART I. Brainstorming Topics

## **Directions:** Identify topics of interest and why you are interested in them.

## Learning goal:Explore potential topics of interest.

**Topic 1:**

What interests me about this topic:

**Topic 2:**

What interests me about this topic:

**Topic 3:**

What interests me about this topic:

# PART II. Preliminary Research

## **Directions:** Using CatSearch from the library homepage, search for each topic.

## Learning goal:Understand how preliminary research can help develop your original research question.

**Keywords used for Topic 1:**

Number of initial search results:

Useful subject filters:

**Keywords used for Topic 2:**

Number of initial search results:

Useful subject filters:

**Keywords used for Topic 3:**

Number of initial search results:

Useful subject filters:

# PART III.

## **Directions:**

## Identify **one peer-reviewed article or resource** from CatSearch or another library database. Read it carefully and then answer the following questions.

## Learning goal: Find scholarly articles.

**What database did you use to find your article** (e.g., CatSearch, Academic Search Complete, etc):

**What is the title of the peer-reviewed article or resource you found:**

**Write down the citation from CatSearch:** \*[Instructions can be found on our online Citations Guide](https://montana.libapps.com/libguides/admin_c.php?g=888597&p=6388078).

1. How does this sources help support your topic?
2. Has the source changed or added to your prior understanding of the topic?
3. What perspectives are missing from the source that you would like to know more about?
4. What questions has this source raised for you that you might like to explore further with research?

Activity: Brainstorming Keywords

# What are Keywords?

* Keywords are words that represent main concepts in a research topic.
* You use keywords to search for information about your research topics.
* If you search on Google, you know a thing or two about keywords!

# Types of Keywords:

* Main concepts
* Synonyms
* Related terms (broad or narrow)

1. **Write your Research Question or Thesis Statement**, then circle the words that represent the Main Concepts in your research question or statement:
2. **Fill out the table below with your main keywords, synonyms, and related terms:**

|  | Keyword/concept 1 | Keyword/concept 2 | Keyword/concept 3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Keywords or Concepts: |  |  |  |
| Synonyms: |  |  |  |
| Related terms: |  |  |  |

Advanced Searching with Keywords

# Creating a Search

* Once you have keywords, you need to put them together to search for information.
* You can put keywords together by using Boolean Operators, which link keywords together.

| **Link terms with these words: (Boolean Operators)** | **Reason to Use:** | **Example:** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AND | NARROWS RESULTS. Searches for items that talk about both concepts together, and to decrease results. | women AND military |
| OR | INCREASES RESULTS. Searches for items that talk about either concept individually, and to broaden results. | women OR females |
| NOT | ELIMINATES TERMS. To eliminate terms and concepts and to decrease results. | women NOT men |
| **EXAMPLE SEARCH:**  **\*enter this into the search**  **box of a database** | **(Women OR females) AND (Military)** |  |

1. **Narrow Your Search** Link some of your keywords from different main concepts together with “AND” to create a search string:
2. **Expand Your Search** Link some of your synonyms for keywords together with “OR” to create a search. ***TIP:*** *You can use “OR” to link related keywords together to help you get the big picture of a topic.*