



**Selkirk
College
Library**

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Important: Read This

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Library Research: A Workbook for SEG

(School of Environment & Geomatics)

Library research is an important skill for student success. This assignment will take you step-by-step through the research process.

In completing this workbook you will learn how to find articles, reports, and books that you can use in writing a research paper for Technical Writing & Communications (TWC) or for another course.

FYI: Sections marked FYI are “for your information.”

A Librarian from Selkirk College will be evaluating your completed assignment.

Contact Us

Selkirk College Librarians are available to help you with your research. We can assist you by email, by phone, or in person at the Castlegar campus.

- Email: reference@selkirk.ca
- Phone: 1-888-953-1133 ext. 21229 (or ask for the Library)
- Phone: (250) 365-1229 (local call)
- Online: <http://library.selkirk.ca/>

Step 1: The Search Plan

Have a plan before beginning your research. A good plan includes:

- a) picking a topic *that interests you*
- b) writing a research question
- c) identifying search terms

Sample Search Plan

- a) **Topic:** Genetically modified organisms
- b) **Research question:** Are **genetically modified food** crops **safe** for **human** consumption?
- c) Identify the **main concepts:** *These will become our **search terms**.*

Tips: Choosing Search Terms

- Use nouns. These may be words or phrases.
- Avoid biased words
 - *search terms such as “positive” or “negative” or “good” or “bad” bias your results*

► The Search Plan is used to find information on a topic in library databases.

Search Plan					
<i>Use the main concepts from your research question to plan your first search. Write two or three search terms.</i>					
1	genetically modified food	AND	safety	AND	humans
<i>Think of alternate terms (or synonyms) for these search terms.</i>					
2	GM crops	AND	health	AND	
<i>Write down any new search terms you discover over the course of your research.</i>					
3	transgenic plants		risks		

Step 1: My Search Plan

Make a plan before beginning your research. Write your search plan out here:

a) **Topic**

b) **Research Question**

c) **Search Terms**

Identify the main concepts of your research question. *Tip: circle or highlight them.*

- Use nouns. These may be words or phrases.
- Avoid biased words *such as “positive” or “negative” or “good” or “bad.”*

► Use your Search Plan to find information on your topic in library databases.

Search Plan					
<i>Use the main concepts from your research question to plan your first search. Write two or three search terms.</i>					
1		AND		AND	
<i>Think of alternate terms (or synonyms) for these search terms.</i>					
2		AND		AND	
<i>Write down any new search terms you discover over the course of your research.</i>					
3					

Step 2: Finding Research Articles Using Online Databases

The Library subscribes to many databases that you can search to find journal and magazine articles and reports. These databases can be accessed on campus or remotely.

Remote Access

You can access Library databases remotely using:

- Your home computer
- A wireless device on campus

Personal Login

You will be prompted to login when you try to access Library databases from a personal computer. Login using your Library account:

Username: your **student number**
Password: **last 4 digits** of your student number

Tip: *You can change your password on the Library website*

Login not working? *Contact the Library for assistance.*

Academic Search

Search the Academic Search database to find a **journal** or **magazine article** on your topic.

Step 1: Go to the Library homepage > <http://library.selkirk.ca>

To access databases: Under FIND choose > [Research Databases](#)

Step 2: Choose **A** under **Browse Databases by Title**

Step 3: Find **Academic Search Complete** and click **Connect**

Step 4: Choose your search terms

Tip: *See your Search Plan (page 3)*

1st search term: _____

AND

2nd search term: _____

AND

3rd search term (optional): _____

Step 5: Type your search in the search boxes. Click **search**.

- enter 2 - 3 search terms for your topic
- combine your search terms using **AND**

▪ **How many articles (results) were found?** _____

HELP! I got **NO RESULTS** ...

- check your spelling
- use fewer search terms
- use alternative search terms

HELP! I've got **TOO MANY** articles ...

- If your result list is too large, add another search term to your search.

Limiting Your Results #1: Full Text Articles

Limit To

Full Text

References Available

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

1990 Publication Date 2016

Find the Full Text limiter in the left column.

Full text articles are available from the database in pdf or html format.

● **How many articles?** _____

Limiting Your Results #2: Academic Articles

Limit To

- Full Text
- References Available
- Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

1990 Publication Date 2016

Find the Scholarly Journal limiter in the left column.

Peer reviewed articles are academic or scientific works evaluated by other professionals in the same field.

- How many articles? _____

Find a Primary Source Article

Primary source articles are written by researchers and report on original findings from studies. Most commonly found in peer reviewed journals, they can also be reports from government agencies, papers presented at conferences, or full length monographs (books).

The factors that you will be considering for choosing a primary source article are:

- If there is a description of methodology
- If there is a 'results' section
- What the abstract tells you about the paper

Choose an Article

Choose an article from your result list that you judge to be strongly related to your research question. It must be a primary source document.

Tip: *Click on the title to see the full record*

Write down the citation elements for the article you chose.

- **Author / Authors**

Name(s): _____

- **Title of Article**

Full title: _____

- **Publication Information**

Title of journal or magazine (source): _____

Volume / issue number: _____

Date: _____

Pages: _____

FYI: Citations


A citation is all of the information needed to identify a source such as an article or book. Common elements for an article citation include: author(s), article title, publication title, volume & issue, page range, and date.

Sample Article Citation: APA Style

Halford, N. G., Hudson, E., Gimson, A., Weightman, R., Shewry, P. R., & Tompkins, S. (2014). Safety assessment of genetically modified plants with deliberately altered composition. *Plant Biotechnology Journal*, 12(6), 651-654. doi:10.1111/pbi.12194

Emailing a Full Text Article

You may prefer to spend your time in the Library doing research and email articles to yourself to read at home. Here are some email tips:

1. Click on the title of an article that has full text (html or pdf)
2. Click on E-mail  Tip: *Look in the right side column*
3. Enter your email address
4. Enter a subject
5. Choose a citation format (APA, MLA etc.)
5. Click SEND

Expanding Your Search: Using Subject Terms

Tip: *If there are no subject terms in your article, choose a different article*

Step 1: Look at the **subject terms** for the article you chose.

Write down the one that you judge to be most useful for your topic.

Step 2: Search on this subject term.

Tip: *Subject terms are **hyperlinks**. Click on the subject term to run a new search.*

How many articles (results) did you get? _____

Step 3: Refine this search by adding another search term.

AND Search term: _____

How many articles (results) did you get? _____

Search a Different Database

The Selkirk College Library subscribes to a number of article databases. It is a good strategy to search more than one database to get the best coverage of your topic.

Choosing a Database

Step 1: Go to the Library homepage > <http://library.selkirk.ca>

To access databases choose > FIND > [Research Databases](#)

Step 2: Browse databases by subject area

Tip: *Environment & Geomatics or Sciences are good choices*

Step 3: Choose a database to search.

Tip: *Choose Biological & Agricultural Index Plus, CBCA Reference or JSTOR*

Name of database: _____

Choosing Your Search Terms

Successful researchers learn from their experience. They learn from their successful and from their unsuccessful search attempts.

In choosing your search terms consider your initial search plan (page 3). Also consider search terms you have learned along the way.

1st search term: _____

AND

2nd search term: _____

AND

3rd search term (optional): _____

- Record the citation elements of a primary source article useful for your topic.

Article Title: _____

Author(s): _____

Journal Title: _____

Volume & issue: _____

Date: _____ Page Numbers: _____

Step 3: Search for Technical Reports

There is a large amount of research generated by organizations such as government ministries, non-profits, institutes and think tanks. This is called 'gray literature.'

- Go to > Research Databases > (Browse databases by subject area) > [Government](#)
- Choose one of the following databases:

Canadian Electronic Library

Canadian Government and Legislative Libraries Online Publications

US Forest Service Research Publications

- Name of database: _____

Tip: *These databases may not provide as many search options. Start with a simple keyword search. If you get too many results, look for an 'advanced' tab and limit your search terms to the title or citation field.*

- Run a search on your topic.
Record the citation elements of the document that you judge to be useful:

Title : _____

Author(s): _____

Publisher: **Tip:** *The organization may be both the author and publisher*

Date: _____

URL (optional): _____

Step 4: The Library Catalogue

Search for Books & eBooks

The library catalogue is a database of books and ebooks (electronic books) that can be borrowed from the Selkirk College Library. Use your research skills to find library books on your topic.

Search Terms

- Use your Search Plan (page 3) to choose your search terms OR use new search terms you have learned over the course of your research.

Tips: *Our library catalogue is a small database.
One or two search terms should be sufficient.*

1st search term: _____

AND

2nd search term (optional): _____

Searching the Library Catalogue

- Go to the Library home page > <http://library.selkirk.ca>
- Type your search request into the **Catalogue Quick Search** box. Click **search**.

Example: **Water** AND **Government policy**

Tips: Remember to combine search terms using **AND**

You can also choose Find > [Books & Media](#) to search the catalogue

- Scan one or two screens of results.

Search Results

Are some of these items relevant to your research question?

yes **no**

Important: *It is not wrong to answer no!*

► **If you found a relevant title go to the next activity: “Choosing a Title”**

Revising Your Search

If you did not get useful results the first time try another search.

Tips: *Change one or both of your search terms.*

Not enough titles? Simplify your search. Use fewer search terms.

Too many titles? Add another search term.

1st search term: _____

AND

2nd search term (optional): _____

Choosing a Title

Choose a title from your search results that you think will be useful for your topic.

Tip: *Click on the **Title** to see the full record*

- **Call number**

Tip: *The call number is used to find the book in the library*

Look at the full record to see all of the data elements needed to create a citation for this title. Record the citation elements below.

Tip: *Choose the **Catalog Record** link*

- **Author(s) / Editor(s)**

Name(s): _____

- **Title**

Full title: _____

- **Publication Information**

Place of publication: _____

Name of publisher: _____

Year when the item was published: _____

Tip: *If you need current information a recent publication date is important*

FYI: Citations

A citation is all of the information needed to identify a source such as a book or article. Common elements for a book citation include: author(s), title, place of publication, name of publisher, and date of publication.

Sample Book Citation: APA Style

Kinchy, A. (2012). *Seeds, science, and struggle: The global politics of transgenic crops*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Using Call Numbers to Find More Resources

You can also use call numbers to find more books on your topic.

- Note the **call number** of the book you found to be most useful for your topic (page 12).
- Notice that the call number begins with one or two letters.
Write down the letter(s) that begin your call number: _____

Call Numbers and Subjects

Library material is shelved by subject. This means that the letter(s) you wrote down indicate the subject of your book.

- Use the **Library of Congress Classification System** (LCCS) outline to determine the broad subject area of your book

Tip: *The LCCS outline is posted in the Library AND is available on the web site:*

Help → Subject & Research Guides → Other Guides →
[Library of Congress Classification System](#)

- Write down the **subject area**: _____

Example: SD Forestry

Tip: *If the letters are not listed write down the broad subject area.*

Example: Q Science

Step 5: Citation & Style Guides

Citations

It is important to provide complete citations for all of the resources that you cite in your research paper. A citation includes all of the data elements needed to identify a resource. A list of all the sources you cited may be called “Works Cited” or “References” or “Bibliography” depending on the style guide you are using.

A style guide provides instructions for how to cite resources such as books, articles and videos. Commonly used style guides in the sciences are Scientific and APA.

Help is available on the Library website: Help > [Citation & Style Guides](#)

Plagiarism

When you write a research paper you use sources such as books and articles to support your ideas. Correctly citing all of your sources is a means to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism: *“The presentation of someone else’s words or ideas as your own”*
(Haig, MacMillan, & Raikes, 2010, p. 5)

Notice how we have avoided plagiarism by citing the source of the quotation. In the reference list the citation in APA style would look like this:

Haig, J., MacMillan, V., & Raikes, G. (2010). *Cites & sources: An APA documentation guide* (3rd ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.

Test: What is Plagiarism?

Test your knowledge of plagiarism by answering the following questions:

1. You find a great idea in an article, so you use it in your paper. You don't bother to cite the source of the idea because you've expressed it in your own words. Is this plagiarism?

Yes, it's plagiarism

No, it isn't

2. You copy a paragraph directly from an article you found. You cite the source, but you forget to put quotation marks. Is this plagiarism?

Yes, it's plagiarism

No, it isn't

3. You need an image for your essay. You go online and find one. You don't cite the source of your image because you got it off of the internet. Is this plagiarism?

Yes, it's plagiarism

No, it isn't

Source: Simon Fraser University Library. (2015). *Plagiarism tutorial*. Retrieved from <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/15986>

Learn More About Plagiarism

- Complete the full **Plagiarism Tutorial** available from Simon Fraser University Library at: <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/15986>
- Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty (MLA Style Center) <https://style.mla.org/plagiarism-and-academic-dishonesty/>

Handing in your Workbook for Evaluation

Print. If you are completing this document in print, hand it in at the Main Desk of the Library.

Online. If you are completing this document online, submit it for evaluation via your Moodle course.

Questions?

Contact information for the Selkirk College Librarians is on the first page of this document. Please contact us for assistance.