

## INFORMATION PROBLEM-SOLVING RESOURCES

### SELECTED REFERENCE BOOKS

#### *Have I worded my thesis so it says what I mean?*

**Webster's third new international dictionary of the English language, unabridged - Ref PE 1625 .W36 2002.**

On the stand outside the main room of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor this big, unabridged dictionary is just what you need to determine if ersatz means phony.

**Synonym Finder - Ref PE 1591 .R64 1986**

Here's where you find out that "thin as six o'clock" is a more interesting way to describe your "frail" sister-in-law.

**Acronyms, Initialisms & Abbreviations Dictionary - Ref PE 1693 .G3 1997**

Military acronyms, airport symbols, stock exchange initials, and more – they are all here.

**Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang - Ref PE 2846 .H57 1994**

No where else will you learn that "mojo" (meaning, magic or magical power) made its public appearance in American English in 1926 with Leadbitter and Slaven singing "My Daddy's Got the Mojo, But I Got the Say-So."

#### *What is the more general context surrounding my topic?*

**Encyclopedia Americana - Ref AE 5 .E333 2000**

General and introductory articles often with illustrations and maps for when it is not sufficient to know simply that Darius was the king of Persia – Persia had three kings named Darius.

**New Encyclopedia Britannica - Ref AE 5 .E363 2002**

The encyclopedia of encyclopedias. In less than a column of type you'll find out that Sir Robert Baden-Powell, famous for starting the Boy Scouts (and three years later along with his sister founded the Girl Scouts), actually got the scouting movement underway with his military text book, Aids to Scouting (1899).

**Dictionary of National Biography - Ref DA 28 .D45**

Don't be fooled by the name. This is actually an encyclopedia of biographies. Limited to British notables this work is famous for its literary standards, reliable information, and occasionally droll tone, as in the description of how John Milton's notorious first marriage commenced, "About Whitsuntide (21 May 1643) Milton took a journey into the country, assigning no reason, and came back with a wife."

### **St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture - Ref E 169.1 .S764 2000**

Snapshot articles on gas stations and gated communities, Nancy Friday and Harry Houdini, here in accessible essays, thoroughly illustrated, are the snap, crackle, pop, and cultural implications of the history and heroes who race past us.

### **What is the correct vocabulary to use in searching for concepts related to my topic?**

#### **Library of Congress Subject Headings - Volumes held at Reference Desk**

Most academic libraries in the U.S. and Canada organize their collections using the Library of Congress Subject Headings. This means you can search a library catalog for “alien kidnapping” till the dish runs away with the spoon and find nothing because the official, or controlled, vocabulary is “alien abduction” not “alien kidnapping”. Don’t try to know this. Don’t try guessing. Just know this is where to look it up.

#### **Medical Subject Headings - Ref Z 6660 .I 422 (Note: Item not catalogued)**

Usually abbreviated as MeSH this large single volume will tell you that as far as the National Library of Medicine is concerned “fatigue” rather than “lassitude” is the correct choice of search terms. Related terms in this controlled vocabulary are “asthenia” and “exertion”. While not capricious, the choice of official search terms (the controlled vocabulary) is somewhat arbitrary. So what you need to know is where to find the correct term, and this is one of those places.

#### **Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors - Ref Z 5811 .E 422 2001**

ERIC is the acronym for the Educational Resources Information Center of the U.S. Department of Education. ERIC’s controlled vocabulary is particularly useful for topics in and related to education. This volume includes Scope Notes, which define important terms. You will discover that “work ethic” is “a set of values or beliefs concerning the place of work in one’s life – traditionally, the view of work as a moral obligation”, that this term is used instead of “Protestant Ethic” and “Puritan Ethic”, and that related terms include “capitalism” and “motivation”.

### **How can I find individual articles focused more precisely on my topic?**

#### **Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature - Ref AI 3 .R 48**

The great ancestor to all periodical indexes this is an alphabetical index of subjects and authors for general interest English language periodicals. Here you will find under the subject “hoaxes” an article titled, “Sheer Lunacy” in Scientific American, February 2003, page 92.

#### **Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature - Ref Z 6675 .N 7 C 8**

Abbreviated as CINAHL this work is published 4 times a year and indexes over 1,600 journals. Under the subject heading “exercise in old age” you will find five articles, one titled, “The efficacy of exercise as a long-term antidepressant in elderly subjects: a randomized, controlled trial.” The article contains tables, charts, and a bibliography of nineteen references and appeared in the August 2001 edition of Journals of Gerontology. Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, pages M497 – 504.

#### **Current Index to Journals in Education - Ref Z 5813 .C 8**

Published monthly and sometimes referred to as CIJE this clumsily arranged index is divided into four separate sections. However, the work becomes worth its weight in the pithy abstracts it offers for every article. Now you know which relevant articles to read start-to-finish and which ones to glance over.

## **The Philosopher's Index: An International Index to Philosophical Periodicals and Books - Ref B 1 .P 49**

As indicated by the sub-title this index covers books as well as journal articles, nor is it limited to English language publications, including French, German, Spanish, and Italian works as well. A quarterly publication searchable by both subject and author this valuable worked is flawed by author written abstracts.

### **Where can I get some guidelines on organizing and composing the full argument of my thesis?**

## **The Chicago Manual of Style - Ref Z 253 .U69 2003**

Dauntingly comprehensive this hefty tome is blessedly well organized allowing us mere mortals to find our way among topics from the author's responsibilities for manuscript preparation and editing, through the comma (eleven pages), to bibliographic documentation. Three chapters in particular, Grammar and Usage (5), Punctuation (6), and Spelling (7) are invaluable.

## **A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations - Ref LB 2369 .T8 1996**

Frequently referred to as "Turabian," the original the author, this is a more accessible rendition of the manuscript guidelines found in the Chicago Manual of Style. An exhaustive list of examples for Notes and Bibliographic References is this work's hallmark.

## **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers - Ref LB 2369 .G53 2003**

This work and its companion volume, MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, constitute the official writing guides of the Modern Language Association of America. As such they are the final authority as to the correct format for academic papers submitted in the humanities (Art, English Literature, Philosophy, History, Modern Languages, Classics). Pay special attention to the section on citing electronic publications (5.7).

## **Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association - Ref BF 76.7 .P83 2001**

Commonly referred to as "APA" this work is to the social sciences what MLA (above) is to the humanities, namely the last word on what your paper should look like in Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Education, Health Sciences. Most users find the APA guidelines somewhat counter-intuitive, thus spawning a host of handbooks to this handbook. Once again, the information on citing electronic media (4 I) merits special attention.

## **SELECTED WEB SITES**

### **Where can I learn what I need to know to start searching the Internet?**

## **Bare Bones 101 - <http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/bones.html>**

Ellen Chamberlain's basic tutorial on searching the Web (Internet) will walk you through those first steps (like how to read a URL, Universal Resource Locator) so you will soon be dancing (decoding error messages). This site also points out the slippery spots on the dance floor that you will want to sashay around, like the instability of web pages - they can change more frequently than your dancing partners.

**Where can I one-stop-shop for scholarly resources on the Internet?**

**Infomine - <http://infomine.ucr.edu/>**

This site coughs and chugs like an old pick-up, but it delivers. A searchable index with links to 106,350 “academically valuable resources,” use Infomine to build a bibliography of intellectually credible Web information sources. A search for “Homer” leads you to the Homer Homepage, which itself has over 50 links to academic Web sites dealing with the ancient Greek bard.

**How can I search the Search Engines?**

**Metacrawler - <http://www.metacrawler.com>**

By providing the combined results of a variety of search engines this meta-searching site promises better results and more coverage of the Web. Searching “chess” via Metacrawler you will pull-up 94 hits, which are divided into 9 separate categories. An identical Google search pulls-up 5,190,000 hits with no handy category divisions.

**Where can I find some tips on how to organize and compose my paper?**

**The UVic Writer’s Guide - <http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/>**

The University of Victoria’s Hypertext Writer’s Guide is a comprehensive site covering everything from literary terms, to grammar, logic, and summaries. But the meat of the order comes in the section on Essays. Here different types of essays are distinguished one from another (e.g. the expository essay vs. the review), tips are offered on getting started, organizing, writing, and editing. The nice distinction between “topic” (subject of the essay) and “thesis” (essay author’s position on the subject) will save you from starting off with wild swings at high fastballs.

**I’ve heard that all good essays begin with a “close reading” – what is this and how do I do it?**

**How to Do a Close Reading -**

**<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/CloseReading.html>**

All good writing does begin with Close Reading. Here is what it is, how to do it, with not a word wasted.