

# Getting Started in Research

## Define Your Topic

Use class discussions as a springboard for the topic that you select. In order to investigate a topic, you first have to understand its context and know a little about it. If you have been assigned a topic and you have no idea what it means, this is the time to discuss it with your teacher.

## Get a Basic Overview

Help define your topic by reading an introduction or basic overview on your topic. For example, read an article in an encyclopedia in your field. Or your teacher may suggest an introductory work.

A research paper is *not* simply a compilation of what other people have said. It should be a synthesis of your reading and your ideas. A thesis statement expresses where you want to go with your paper. Although you may adjust this statement slightly as you go along, the thesis statement will give direction to your work. For information on how to write a thesis statement, see:  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>  
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Thesis.html>

In Biblical Studies, students are typically asked to write an exegesis paper, a paper that analyzes a particular passage of the Bible. This type of research uses special tools that are just for Biblical research.

## Gather Resources

Your introductory reading should direct you to additional readings through the *bibliography* that is found at the end. You will need to be able to interpret the *citations* in the bibliography so that you can find each article and book. (Consult Turabian's *A Manual for Writers* for information about citations and citation styles.) When you have exhausted this approach, it is time to start searching for additional materials.

## Library Information Sheets

The Reference Desk has information sheets which provide resources for specific areas of interest. See <http://www.gtu.edu/library/get-help/infosheets>

## Look up Books on GRACE

To see if the GTU Library owns a particular book, look it up on GRACE, the library catalog. Search GRACE at <http://grace.gtu.edu/search/> to see what books and other materials the library owns.

## Journal Articles on Research Databases

Connect at <http://www.gtu.edu/library/find-articles> to go to databases. These provide access to a variety of types of materials. For example, you can search for journal articles (citations only for some databases) or search online encyclopedias.

The library also subscribes to special research databases to support your studies. Search at <http://www.gtu.edu/library/electronic-resources>. These databases are different from sites found on the web.

## Find UCB Materials on MELVYL

GTU students can obtain a free card to borrow materials from the UC Berkeley Library. Just as GRACE is the library catalog for the GTU Library, MELVYL is the library catalog for the UCB Library. You can search MELVYL at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/>.

## The Internet

Web pages found on the Internet can be useful for gathering information about organizations, for finding copies of official documents or classic texts, for statistics or small facts, or for finding practical ideas for ministry.

If you do use a web site as a resource, you must provide the citation information about that source, just as you would for any resource that you used in your research. For more help, see Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*.

## **Read Mindfully**

Whatever you read, always read *mindfully*. Keep your thesis statement in mind. Ask yourself why you chose this book to read. This will help keep you on track. For more advice, see:

*Reading to Comprehend and Learn*  
<http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learning/reading-skills/>

Resources vary in quality. You should always assess the quality of a resource before, during, and after your reading. You should also know the difference between peer-review journals and trade journals. For more information, see:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/evaluation.html>  
<http://www.library.unr.edu/instruction/help/peer.html>

## **Writing Advice**

*Writing Research Essays in North American Academic Institutions - A Guide for Students of all Nations*  
[http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/research\\_essays.htm](http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/research_essays.htm)

*Plagiarism: What it is and How to Avoid it*  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>

*How to Use Evidence* (includes advice about use of quotations)  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>

*How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography*  
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm>

See also these resources in GRACE:

*The Craft of Revision* PE 1408 M787 2001

*Writing with Style* PE 1408 T69 1975

*Writing the Natural Way* PE 1408 R566 1983

*Writing on Both Sides of the Brain* PN 147 K63 1986

## **For more insight and guidance:**

**Books in the GTU Library** (links search GRACE):

- *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Turabian)  
 REF LB2369.T8 1996, 2007 (& circulation)
- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*  
 REF LB2369 G53 1999, 2003 (& circulation)
- *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*  
 BL 41 V94 2001
- *The Seminary Student Writes*  
 BR 117 C67 2000
- *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects*  
 REF BV4165 D38 1984 (& circulation)
- *An Introduction to Theological Research*  
 BR 118 B28 2000
- *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*  
 PE 1408 H277 1991
- *The Random House Handbook*  
 PE 1408 C715 1992
- *Student's Guide for Writing College Papers*  
 LB 2369 T82 1976
- *The Craft of Research* Q 180.55 M4 B66 2003
- *The Modern Researcher* D 13 B334 1992
- *The Proposal Cookbook* LB 2369 F73 1979; 1984 (SFTS only)

## **On the web**

*Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog*  
<http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/textbook.htm>

## **Help from a person**

Ask at the Reference Desk, where professional librarians are there to help you; or email us at [library@gtu.edu](mailto:library@gtu.edu). Also, consider attending a workshop; see <http://www.gtu.edu/library/get-help/workshops>