Step 4: Find other resources

Laws & court cases
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• Lexis-Nexis Academic

Note: It is helpful to know whether the case or law came from federal (U.S.) or state government, the dates, the people involved, & (generally) what the law or case was about. Ask a librarian if you need help.

Opinion polls
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• iPoll
• Odum Institute
• Polling the Nations

Video
See https://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/researchguides/communications/streaming.html

Beyond Penn State
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• WorldCat and/or
• ACCESS PA
Order items through ILLiad, Penn State’s Interlibrary Loan System, https://ill.libraries.psu.edu

Why search outside Penn State? If your professor expects you to find “all” the information on your topic, you need to search many libraries. WorldCat is a database of more than 10,000 college libraries. ACCESS PA includes all types of libraries in Pennsylvania.

Step 5: Evaluate your sources

Currency?
• When was this published or posted?
• When was it last updated?
• Is this up-to-date enough for your topic?

Relevance?
• Does this answer your question or relate to your topic?
• Was it written for college students or professionals? (or for other people with needs like yours?)
• Can you understand what you are reading? Is the reading level too easy or too hard?

Authority?
• Who is the writer, publisher, and sponsor?
• Does the URL tell you anything about who created or supports it?
• What is the writer’s education and profession? Where does (s)he work? Does this make her/him an expert on your topic?
• Can you contact the writer and/or publisher to learn more about this?

Accuracy?
• Is this “peer-reviewed,” “refereed,” or edited for quality? By whom?
• Is it backed up with evidence — citations to other books, articles, data, interviews, etc.?
• Can you find the same information in other sources? How does the information relate to your own experiences?
• Does this have any obvious grammar, spelling, or factual mistakes?

Purpose?
• Is this fact or opinion?
• Why are the writer and publisher providing this information? To entertain, inform, teach, or sell to you?
• Are there biases — cultural, political, religious, or other points of view that cause the writer to emphasize some issues or ignore others?

*The “CRAAP test” was created by California State University—Chico

Beyond Penn State
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• WorldCat and/or
• ACCESS PA
Order items through ILLiad, Penn State’s Interlibrary Loan System, https://ill.libraries.psu.edu

Opinion polls
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• iPoll
• Odum Institute
• Polling the Nations

Video
See https://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/researchguides/communications/streaming.html

Beyond Penn State
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• WorldCat and/or
• ACCESS PA
Order items through ILLiad, Penn State’s Interlibrary Loan System, https://ill.libraries.psu.edu

Why search outside Penn State? If your professor expects you to find “all” the information on your topic, you need to search many libraries. WorldCat is a database of more than 10,000 college libraries. ACCESS PA includes all types of libraries in Pennsylvania.
Step 1: Find basic facts, encyclopedias & handbooks
(some online; some on 1st floor of Harrisburg Library)

Start with
http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• CQ Researcher
• Gale Virtual Reference Library
• Oxford Reference Online
• Sage Reference Online

Next, try “Reference” on 1st floor:
—Civil rights: REF KF4748
—Disabilities: REF HV1568
—Ethnic groups in the U.S.: REF E184-E185
—Gender & LGBTQ: REF HQ71-HQ77 & HQ1075-HQ2030
—Native Americans: REF E75-E99
—Religious diversity: REF BL-BX
—Other areas recommended by the librarian

Why use encyclopedias and handbooks?
They help you:
—Focus on important ideas & people
—Explore related topics
—Find more keywords to use further searches
—Identify best sources for researching your topic
—Put together a “bibliography”

With this background information, it’s much easier to decide which books & journal articles are going to be helpful & understand how they all fit together in your project.

Step 2: Find books
(some online; some on 2nd & 3rd floors of Harrisburg Library)

Start with
• The CAT, http://cat.libraries.psu.edu/
  Use the CAT’s “Advanced Search” to look for books from certain dates, or to choose audio, video, or other formats.

Where to find books at Harrisburg
Most books:
—2nd floor: “E184-185” section
—3rd floor: “HM” & “HN” sections

Depending on your topic:
—Communities, Class, & Race: 3rd floor, “HT” section
—Criminology: 3rd floor, “HV” section
—Gender, Family, & Sexuality: 3rd floor, “HQ” section
—Political Science: 3rd floor, “J” section
—Psychology: 2nd floor, “BF” section
—Public Health: 3rd floor, “RA” section
—Other areas recommended by the librarian

Why use books?
Books add to basic information that you learned from encyclopedias & handbooks. They bridge between beginner’s information & scholarly articles. Books may discuss:
—History or theories
—An overview: the “big picture” and related parts
—Best practices or recommendations
—Recent research

Look for a “Table of Contents” or a list of chapters in each book. Read the parts that most interest you.

Step 3: Find magazines & journals
(mostly online)

Start with
• LionSearch, http://www.libraries.psu.edu

If you need to focus, or need better search abilities
Go to http://www.libraries.psu.edu, click on “Databases,” then choose:
• AgeLine (for the elderly/senior citizens)
• Ethnic Newswatch
• HAPI (Hispanic Americans)
• International Index to Black Periodicals
• LGBT Life
• PsycINFO
• Race Relations Abstracts
• Women’s Studies International
• Other databases recommended by the librarian

Articles beyond Penn State
• Google Scholar, http://scholar.google.com/

Why use databases?
Databases empower you to search thousands of journals at one time. They also allow you to limit results by date, type of article, & other criteria. Use the “Get It” button to see Penn State’s online copy of a journal (if it exists), check if Harrisburg Library owns a paper copy, or order a free copy through ILLiad (interlibrary loan).

Some search tips
child* = finds any word that begins with a root
child OR youth = finds either word (good for synonyms)
child AND gender = finds both words (good for linking two different ideas together)
sort by relevance = puts “best” items at the top of your results list

If you need help at any time, just ask:
Bernadette Lear, BAL19@psu.edu,
(717) 948-6360, Room LIB 102G