

DUGGAN LIBRARY INSTRUCTIONAL SCREENCASTS

Topic Development and Search Strategies

Research Topic



- Predetermined based on class requirement
- Anything goes
- Something in between

Generating Topic Ideas



- Read a newspaper
- Talk to friends or professor
- Browse some reference works
- Review course texts
- Consult with reference librarian
- ...a million other possibilities

Make it Personal



Being interested = Engagement = More
interesting paper

(and usually a better grade)

Trick of the (Topic) Trade



- Too *broad* is a recipe for frustration
- Be *specific* as possible
- A *focused* topic facilitates easier searching

Ask Yourself a Question



- Formulate a research question based on your topic
- Helps guide inquiry
- Example:
“Is teenage student-athlete gambling a problem or just an extension of competition?”

Major Search Concepts



“Is teenage student-athlete gambling a problem or just an extension of competition?”

- Identify major concepts:
 - ▣ Student
 - ▣ Athlete
 - ▣ Gambling

Minor Search Concepts



- Continuing with our example
 - ▣ “Problem” and “Competition” provide a *context* for inquiry but are not *root* of the inquiry
 - ▣ “Teenage” can be defined as part of the student-athlete concept or applied as an age limiter in many databases
 - ▣ Too many major concepts makes database searching unwieldy

Synonyms to Major Concepts



- Student (teenage)
 - ▣ *College, Amateur, High School, Higher Education*
- Athlete
 - ▣ *Jock, Player, Sports*
- Gambling
 - ▣ *Betting, Bookie, Point-Shaving*

Logical (Boolean) Operators



□ AND

- Concept A **AND** Concept B both have to be present in the search results

□ OR

- Either Concept A **OR** Concept B have to be present in the search results (could be both)

□ NOT

- Concept A **NOT** Concept B means one concept must be present and the other cannot.

Boolean Operators, Part II

- Counter-intuitive for many people
- Helps to create a quick diagram
 - ▣ Make this a part of a *research diary*

	Student	AND	Athlete	AND	Gambling
OR	College		Jock		Betting
OR	Amateur		Player		Bookie
OR	Higher Education		Sports		Point-Shaving
OR	High School				

Let's Review



- Choose a topic and then make it specific
- Develop research question
- Identify major concepts and synonyms
- Understand Boolean operators
- Next step: consider appropriate databases

TIP: Keep a research diary

For More Information...



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