

Sources of Information

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how to collect research for your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Sources of Information
2. Research Librarians
3. Bibliographies
4. Books
5. Specialized Search Engines and Databases
6. Articles
7. ADAM
8. News Sources vs. Scholarly Sources

1. Research Librarians

When it comes to research, do you feel completely lost, with no idea how or where to start looking for information?

In these cases, a research librarian can be a real godsend. Research librarians are trained to give helpful advice about structuring the research process and looking in the right places for relevant information.

Even if you're comfortable with research, a research librarian may be able to save a lot of time by helping you refine your search.

2. Bibliographies

A **bibliography** is a collection of publication information about books, articles, and other resources that address a particular topic.

You may be surprised to discover how many topics have bibliographies dedicated specifically to them, from very specific topics such as the novel *David Copperfield* to broader topics such as American environmental history.

Annotated bibliographies are especially helpful, since they provide a summary of each resource listed.



TERM TO KNOW

Bibliography

A list of books or documents relevant to a particular subject or author.

3. Books

If you are looking for general information about your topic, encyclopedias and other reference books are a great place to start.

If you want something more specific, search for informative books about your topic and anthologies that include essays or articles about relevant issues.

4. Specialized Search Engines and Databases

Specialized search engines and databases make it easier to target specific information and filter out irrelevant material.

If you are affiliated with a university, you probably have free access to research databases such as:

- JSTOR
- EBSCO
- ProQuest
- LexisNexis Academic

These services provide a variety of search criteria for finding relevant academic articles and news stories.

If you are conducting independent research, try Google Scholar, which is free for everyone.

5. Articles

If you want the most up-to-date sources of information about your topic, look for articles in academic journals and news publications. The Internet is a great resource for finding articles, but you have to be careful—make sure your sources are trustworthy.

Books and articles published in academic journals usually go through a lengthy review process that verifies the author's expertise and the material's accuracy.

Online publications and blogs may not have such reliable fact-checking procedures. If you find useful information in an unfamiliar online source, try to verify it elsewhere before incorporating it into your speech.

6. ADAM

The "ADAM" protocol is a great way to evaluate the credibility of a resource. Consider these criteria:

Age: Is the source recent? For most topics, current articles are more reliable than old articles, although some topics call for older research.

Depth: How deep and detailed is the analysis? Are its claims supported by valid evidence?

Author: What are the author's qualifications? Do the author's biography and reputation raise the possibility of potential conflicts of interest or biases? What is the author's agenda in writing the article?

Money: Are the authors or publishers affiliated with institutions or corporations that have material benefits at stake in the issue?

7. News Sources vs. Scholarly Sources

News sources often contain both factual content and opinion content. News reporting from less-established outlets is generally considered less reliable for statements of fact.

Editorial commentary, analysis and opinion pieces, whether written by the editors of the publication (editorials) or outside authors (op-eds) are reliable primary sources for statements attributed to that editor or author, but are rarely reliable for statements of fact. When taking information from opinion content, the identity of the author may help determine reliability. The opinions of specialists and recognized experts are more likely to be reliable and to reflect a significant viewpoint.

For information about academic topics, scholarly sources and high-quality non-scholarly sources are generally better than news reports. News reports may be acceptable depending on the context.

Articles which deal in depth with specific studies, as a specialized article on science, are apt to be of more value than general articles which only tangentially deal with a topic. Frequently, although not always, such articles are written by specialist writers who may be cited by name.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how to access sources of information for your speech. **Research librarians** can help you get started on the research process. They can also help you refine your research and save time. **Books** can often be useful sources, but if you're looking for the most current information about your topic, look for **articles**. You can search for articles using **bibliographies** and **specialized search engines and databases**.

Remember that it's best to look at **scholarly sources**, as they tend to be more reliable than general **news sources**. When you are evaluating the credibility of a source, use the **ADAM** protocol: Age (how old is the information), Depth (how detailed is the information), Author (how qualified and reputable is the author), and Money (how monetary benefits may have produced biased information).

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