



Best Sources for Research



For every research project or question there are usually many sources that will provide information to complete the project or answer the question. For example, to find out when a movie is playing at your favorite theater, you can consult a *newspaper*, the *Internet*, or call the *theater*. Which one would be most accurate and up-to-date?

As you begin a research project, you need to think about all the available sources and which one is going to be most helpful. These are called “Best Sources.” You should choose your source based on the information rather than format. (Quaratiello 15).

| Source | Characteristics/Use |
|---|--|
| Specialized (or subject) Encyclopedias | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ General overview of a broad topic: Genetic diseases, North American Native Americans ❖ Discover key concepts, people, dates and terms that allow you to formulate a search strategy |
| Reference Books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Quick information about various subjects ❖ Includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ dictionaries ○ encyclopedias ○ atlases ○ almanacs ○ biographical sets. |
| Books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In depth information on a wide range of topics ❖ May be limited for current information due to the delay in publication and editorial review time ❖ Have gone through editorial review process |
| eBooks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Books that are in electronic format ❖ Can be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference texts ○ Books in the public domain ○ Digitally published books for eReaders like <i>Kindle</i>, <i>Nook</i>, <i>SonyReader</i>, <i>iPad</i> |
| Periodicals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Up-to-date, current <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Popular (<i>Time</i>, <i>People</i>) ○ Scholarly (<i>Journal of Popular Culture</i>) -provide in-depth information on specific topics ○ Newspapers ❖ See http://lib.utsa.edu/Research/Subject/scholarlyguide.html for comparison |
| Subject databases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Usually subscription based on a wide variety of subjects ❖ Authoritative and scholarly ❖ Indexes journals and articles specifically written for the database ❖ Updated frequently ❖ Multisubject <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gale ○ Ebsco ○ InfoTrac ○ ProQuest ❖ Subject specific <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>ABC-Clio History</i> ○ <i>CQ Researcher</i> ○ <i>Opposing Viewpoints</i> ○ <i>Twanyes Author Series</i> |
| Web sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Wealth of quick information ❖ Disorganized – often find information by accident ❖ Commercial – proliferation of ads ❖ Transient – may not be around for long ❖ Need for careful evaluation ❖ Should not be used solely for research purposes |