

Creating a Research Journal

- **Assignment Overview:** To keep a continuous record of the library research a student does for an assigned or chosen research topic without actually submitting a final paper or project, the research journal becomes the final project.

The student will need to include the different sources or databases consulted, and keywords or subject headings searched used in their search entries. In the research journal, the student will list the sources they found to be the most useful for their research topic and explain the differences between the sources they found.

- **Research Journal Guidelines:**

The journal is just a place to write down how you did the research for your topic. The research journal guidelines provide a structure for recording information. These guidelines only address the basics; however, you may include any other resources or strategies that you used.

A) List your topic and keywords or concepts that describe the topic.

B) Browse through reference books on the topic.

- Search the Library Catalog to find reference works. Reference books might include handbooks and specialized subject encyclopedias or dictionaries.
- Is there one source that provides a helpful overview and background on your topic? If so, list it in your journal and explain why it will be useful for your research.

C) Find books in the general collection.

- Search the Library Catalog to find books. List all terms, keywords or subject headings that you used in your searching. Be sure to note the terms or searches that yielded the most results.
- Find the books on the shelves and select any that you think will be most useful. List the title(s) and call number(s) in your journal.
- Explain the difference between the information you found in these books compared to the information from the reference books (encyclopedias, etc).

D) Find journal articles.

- From the library home page select the "Articles" tab. Select the link for Databases by Subject. Begin your search by clicking the subject your topic falls under and selecting a database from the list.

- In your journal list all the terms searched, and your search strategy. For example, "I used the combined search **women AND entrepreneur** to find information about business women in entrepreneurial roles." Which terms or search strategies yielded the best results?
- List bibliographic information for several articles that you think would be helpful for your research on this topic. Be sure to list the titles of any other databases you used in searching.

E) Find web resources.

- Search the web for useful sites. Which search tool(s) did you use (Google, etc.)?
 - List your search terms and phrases. Cite the best web sites in the journal and tell why they will be useful for your topic.
- **Assignment Final Product:** The student will turn in a research journal at the end of the semester chronicling their research process on their selected topic. This should include a thoughtful reflection on the differences between the information available on their topic that they found in encyclopedias, books, and journal articles from the Library databases as well as websites.
- **Purpose and Learning Outcomes:**
1. Provides an introduction to how information is organized, and orients students to resources that can be found in the Eckerd College Library.
 2. Encourages students to think critically about evaluating the quality of resources.
 3. Allows students to practice their writing skills as well as focusing on the research skills needed to find information in the Library on a chosen topic.
- **ACRL Information Literacy Standards incorporated in this assignment:**
- Standard 3 – The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically.
- Standard 4 – The information literate student uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.