



VIC141 Library Research Seminar

Agatha Barc, HBA, MI

Reader Services & Instruction Librarian
agatha.barc@vicu.utoronto.ca
416-585-4463



E.J. PRATT LIBRARY

Major Research Resources

- VIC141 Research Guide:
<http://uoft.me/vic141>
- Best Research Resources in Renaissance Studies:
<http://uoft.me/renaissance-studies>
- Research and Writing Seminars:
<http://uoft.me/vicworkshops>.

University Research Basics

Critical reading begins at the research process:

- i.e. when you start to gather the sources that you will use to contribute your own ideas in writing
- learning not only how to navigate, but also to select the best sources in the "information universe" is an essential academic skill
- knowing the starting points of research—where to find the best, the most relevant, and the most useful materials for your paper is part of doing research critically.

High School vs. University Research

- as a member of the academic community, you are not only required to be familiar with the topic and what has been published on it
- you are also required to identify a **specific issue**, contribute **intellectual analysis**, and by extent, **advance knowledge** within the discipline
- your arguments should answer the questions raised in the assignment description and be informed by the best sources that you can find.

Encyclopedia of the Renaissance

- reference sources contain entries which provide an overview of a topic
- designed to provide background reading for your own development of a topic
- provide such introductory information as definitions, major works and scholars who study the topic, the importance of studying a particular issue or idea, and a works cited list.

Oxford Bibliographies

- a *bibliography* is a list of the books of an author or publisher, or on a specific subject
- *Oxford Bibliographies*, compiled by scholars and librarians, contain extensive lists of annotated major titles of books and journal articles on many topics within the study of the Renaissance.

Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages & the Renaissance

- an online database (index) created in partnership with the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies
- includes find book titles (and even entire book chapters), bibliographies, primary sources and journal articles (and many other types of publications).

What is a “Peer Reviewed” Journal Article?

- the **peer review process** means that manuscripts are evaluated by other scholars in the field in order to determine whether they are worthy of being published
- search *Ulrichsweb* to determine whether a journal is academic and/or peer-reviewed.

Identifying the Best Sources

- Currency and Relevance
- Authority
- Accuracy
- Documentation.

Currency & Relevance

- 1) Does the source provide a basic overview of my topic? Does it place my topic within the context of a larger subject area?
- 2) Does it cover a time period that I am interested in?
- 3) Is the article too basic or elementary for my needs? Is it too specialized or technical for my needs? Who is this resource geared towards?
- 4) When was this resource published? Do I need the most current information or analysis on this topic, or is older information appropriate for my needs?

Authority

- 1) Who wrote and/or published this source?
- 2) What credentials qualify him/her to write on this topic? What else has he/she written?
- 3) Do I require scholarly information, or is more popular material also appropriate?

Accuracy

- 1) Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- 2) Is the author trying to advance a particular position?
- 3) Is there a clearly supported argument or is the argument inflammatory and unsupported?
- 4) Is the publication or organization providing the information known for having a particular philosophical or political position?

Documentation

- 1) What sources does the author cite to back up her points?
- 2) Is a bibliography included with the source?
- 3) If the information relies heavily on statistics, where did those statistics come from? Were they gathered in a methodologically appropriate manner? Were they pulled from another reputable source (e.g., Statistics Canada)?

Identifying the Best Sources

- 1) Identify the type of publication (peer-reviewed academic journal article or magazine article) and the author.
- 2) List one similarity and one difference between the two publications.
- 3) Using the four evaluation criteria, explain whether you would (or would not) cite the publication in your essay (the topic is "history of treatment for autism").