

Chapter Three: Research and Preparation

I. Topic Selection

A. Finding a topic: Our goals

1. Become aware of a civically significant issue
2. Develop skill in using resources to locate information (on topics you are not familiar with)
3. Develop abilities to evaluate the quality of sources and usefulness of particular information types (to your project).

B. Crafting a Research Question

1. The research question is the question about the topic the speaker wishes to answer
2. There are three characteristics of good research questions
 - a. The research question is open-ended and cannot be answered with “yes” or “no”
 - b. The research question must be tailored around the topic
 - c. The answers to strong research questions will become the thesis statement or argument for the speech

C. Refining Your Topic

1. As speakers seek answers to their research question they must be willing to adjust the topic to match the results
2. Good researchers have a method for note-taking
 - a. Using note cards
 - b. Photocopying material
 - c. Keeping a research book
 - d. Post-it notes to label information sources
3. The researcher needs a categorizing system to help organize the information into meaningful points
4. Good researchers keep an open mind and do not just look for data that supports their claims
 - a. It is important to consider opposing information
 - b. There may be multiple ways of interpreting the information
5. Good research may open doors of opportunity not previously considered
6. Think broad initially, then, narrow the topic

II. Information Literacy

A. Characteristics of Information Literacy

1. Information literacy is the ability to figure out the type of information needed, to evaluate it, and to use it properly
2. There are five characteristics of an information literate person
 - a. They determine the information need
 - b. They find evidence for their claim
 - c. Evaluate the information for accuracy, relevance, and bias
 - d. Take the information and create original knowledge
 - e. Awareness of ethical issues such as plagiarism
3. Evaluating information
 - a. Is it accurate?
 - b. Is it biased?
 - c. Is it relevant?
4. The researcher should avoid plagiarism, which is presenting another's work as one's own
 - a. Incremental plagiarism is failing to give credit for parts of a speech
 - b. Patchwork plagiarism is using ideas from several sources that are not cited
 - c. Global plagiarism is stealing an entire piece of work and not citing it
5. An exception to plagiarism is ghostwriting as it is writing in someone else's name

B. Using Information

1. Background information provides context for the speaker's topic
 - a. Need to know the definitions of key concepts
 - b. There is a need to know key dates and identities
 - c. The key players or moments related to the topic
2. Look for information that captures the attention of the audience
 - a. Tangential anecdotes can be used in the body to make a point
 - b. Information can make the speech more creative and enjoyable
3. Evidentiary information supports main points and is directly related to the topic
 - a. Using data from experts
 - b. Is essentially the meat and potatoes of the speech

III. Finding Sources

A. Libraries

1. *JSTOR* lets a researcher examine academic journals pertaining to politics
 2. *Communication/Mass Media Complete* is for journals and mainstream reference concerning communication and journalism
 4. **Lexis-Nexis** is a source specific database that has world-wide newspaper and magazine collections
 4. **Academic Search Premiere** is Monmouth College's primary data base for locating articles in academic journals and main stream and specialty magazines.
5. Librarians are great sources of information
- a. They know where information is located
 - b. They know different research tactics
 - c. Researchers should talk to librarians prior to beginning as they can advise and help reduce time spent researching

B. Personal Correspondence and Interviews

1. Some libraries carry special collections of materials of private citizens
 - a. Materials such as letters
 - b. Materials such as diaries
2. Researchers may use surveys to get people's opinions
 - a. Formal surveys use scientific methods and ensure random sampling
 - b. Informal surveys are non-scientific and takes the opinions of a group of people
3. Interviews allow for a great deal of information from an individual
 - a. Before the interview, know what you want to learn from the interviewee
 - b. Find the proper person to interview
 - c. Develop questions before the interview, be prepared
 - d. If the interview takes a new direction be prepared to create new questions
 - e. Transfer the notes to source material as soon as possible after the interview
 - f. Undercover interviewing is a way to get information by deceiving the person as to what the researcher is actually doing

C. Internet

1. Internet websites are more commonly used by researchers than email
2. Source credibility must be a concern when using the Internet
3. All websites have a designation at the end of the URL
 - a. Government sites end with “gov”
 - b. For profit companies end with “com”
 - c. Institutions of education end with “edu”
 - d. Non-profits end with “org”
 - e. Sites associated with networks end with “net”
4. Not all sites have the same level of reliability
 - a. The most reliable sites are “gov”
 - b. Next in reliability is “edu”
 - c. Lower in reliability are “com,” “.org” and “.net” as they are probably biased in some identifiable way
5. The researcher needs to note the timeliness of the material as it might be outdated

IV. Citation Guides See the link to the [one-page MC MLA guide](#) on the COMM 101 Web Site

A. Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)

1. Uses footnotes
2. Requires a bibliography
3. A published manual covers specific requirements
4. There are nine different types of sources
 - a. Magazine/newspaper article single author
 - b. Magazine/newspaper article with multiple authors
 - c. Magazine/newspaper article with no author
 - e. Journal article
 - f. Chapter in an edited volume
 - g. Book
 - h. Website
 - i. Letter to the editor of a newspaper
 - j. Government report

B. American Psychological Association (APA)

1. APA uses in-text parenthetical citations that occur at the end of sentences or after the author’s name
2. Examples of in-text citations using APA

C. Modern Language Association (MLA)

1. Best seen as a combination of CMS and APA
2. In Works Cited titles are underlined
3. Uses in-text parenthetical citation as does APA
4. Unlike APA, calls for page numbers of every parenthetical reference

D. Verbal Attribution - More on this later.

1. Cite sources within the outline but also verbally
2. There are some easy and common ways to verbally cite sources
 - a. "According to"
 - b. "So-and-so says"