University of South Florida

Fall August, 2008

Researching the World's Information

Barbara Lewis, *University of South Florida*
Andrew M. Smith, *University of South Florida*

Researching the World's Information

Barbara Lewis, M.A. Library and Information Science, Outreach Librarian and
Drew Smith, M.A. Library and Information Science, Information Literacy Librarian,
USF Tampa Library

The University of South Florida is one of the top public research universities in the United States. During your time at USF as an undergraduate student, you will be expected to learn basic research skills, not only so that you can better learn and understand the content of your coursework, but also so that you can begin the process of contributing to the world's storehouse of knowledge as part of the USF academic community(Yüksel, 2008).

You probably already realize that much of the world's information is freely available via the Web. Just by using Google or another search engine, you can locate useful information on billions of web pages.

But much of the world's most important information, especially for academic research purposes, is locked away in for-fee online databases or in print materials (books, journals, magazines, and newspapers) that are not available online. The USF Libraries is responsible for providing USF students, faculty, and staff with free access to as much of this electronic and print information as can be afforded.(Boehle, 2007)   The online information is available through the USF Libraries website, while the print materials are housed in the individual libraries that make up the USF Libraries system. USF undergraduate students on the Tampa campus will find that the USF Tampa Library, the largest of the libraries in the USF Libraries system, will serve as their primary resource for print materials, research help, access to PCs, and places to study and collaborate (Bryant, Martin, & Slay, 2007).

LIBRARIES WEBSITE

The website of the USF Libraries is located at **www.lib.usf.edu**. You may want to bookmark this site on your home computer. The site can also be reached by logging into Blackboard, clicking on the USF Libraries tab on the top right, and then clicking on the USF Libraries link.

The USF Libraries website is organized into 4 main areas:

- Resources (yellow tab)
- Research Help (red tab)
- Services (purple tab)
- Your Library (blue tab)
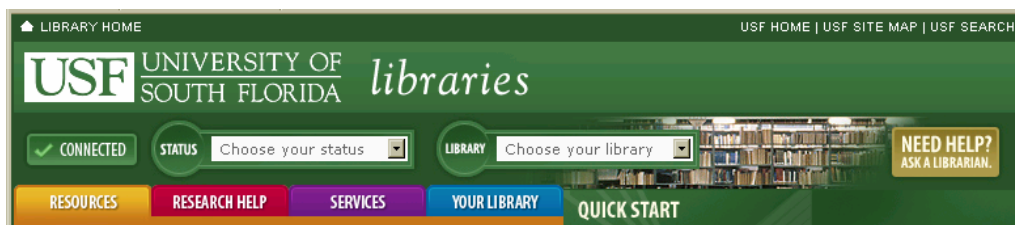
Resources

The **Resources** area, which is normally displayed when you first enter the website, provides you with a list of links that will take you to various online resources provided to you by the USF Libraries. The two most important of these are the USF Libraries Catalog and the Databases (the first two links).

USF Libraries Catalog

The **USF Libraries Catalog** can be used to find out if the USF Libraries own a particular book (print or electronic formats), DVD, CD, or other item. If the USF Libraries own a particular item, you can also see in the Catalog which library and which collection has the item (see *Library Collections* below for more information about collections), where exactly in the library the item is located, and whether or not the item is checked out (and if checked out, when it is due to be returned).

The Catalog can also be used to find out if the USF Libraries subscribe to a particular periodical (newspaper, magazine, or journal), and if so, what range of dates are available (either in online, print, or microform formats).

Databases

The USF Libraries pay a number of different companies (information *vendors*) to make it possible for USF students, faculty, and staff to access online information. This information, which consists of online books, newspaper articles, magazines articles, and journal articles, is organized into hundreds of *databases*. The **Databases by Title/Subject** link takes you to an organized list of these databases. If you choose "by Subject", you will find a category called "General and multidisciplinary".   The "Key sources" in this category will provide the best starting points for most undergraduate research assignments.

Off-campus access

When the USF Libraries purchase access to the information found in the online databases, the license agreement between USF and the vendor usually requires that USF restrict access to USF students, faculty, and staff (who may be anywhere), or to visitors who may be on one of the USF campuses. When you are using any computer located on one of the USF campuses, you will normally have access to all of the electronic information provided by the USF Libraries. This is true whether you're using a

USF-owned PC physically connected to the USF computer network, or using your own laptop computer connected to the USF wireless computer network.

However, if you are using a computer off-campus, you will not have access to the online databases provided by the USF Libraries unless you first go through an authorization process that proves you're a USF student. If you got into the USF Libraries website via Blackboard, you will have already authorized yourself (because you had to provide your NetID and password when you logged into Blackboard). If you don't login to Blackboard first, but instead you go directly to www.lib.usf.edu, the top left corner of the screen may so "Not connected".   You can click on that button to see a screen where you can enter your NetID and password, which will establish that you are a USF student who should have access to the USF Libraries databases.

Research Help

The **Research Help** area tells you how to:

- contact a librarian for assistance
- do research in a particular subject area or for a particular course
- cite the information sources that you find
- use RefWorks (a free online service for organizing your citations)

If you are having problems in using any of the resources or services provided by the USF Libraries, visit the **Research Help** area first. If you don't find the answer to your question here, please contact a USF librarian for help.

Services

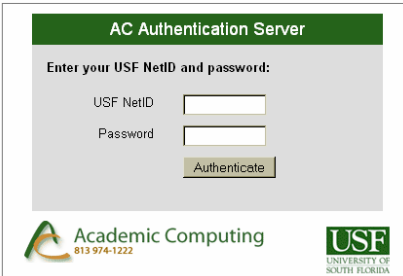The **Services** area explains how to use various library-related services, including:

- connecting to the USF Libraries online resources when you're off-campus
- renewing online the books you've checked out so that you don't have to come to the USF Tampa Library to do the renewals
- obtaining items from other libraries that the USF Tampa Library doesn't own
- borrowing materials from the USF Tampa Library (how many items you can borrow at a time, how long you can borrow them for)

Your Library

The **Your Library** area provides:

- contact information for each of the libraries in the USF Libraries system (web address, phone number, location),
- contact information for each member of the USF Libraries staff,
- policies regarding fines resulting from overdue materials,

Sign in

AC Authentication Server

Enter your USF NetID and password:

USF NetID
Password

Authenticate

Academic Computing
813 974-1222

USF
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

- the schedule of open hours for each library (this varies according to the time of year and during holidays)
- a form for you to submit comments and suggestions to the USF Libraries
- a description of the way in which each of the USF Libraries addresses ADA-compliant access.

TAMPA LIBRARY

Welcome to the USF Tampa Library! With six floors above ground, the Library is the tallest building on campus. And, we're easy to find. Conveniently located next to Cooper Hall, we're near the classroom buildings for most of the colleges on campus. Living in the dorms, we're just a short walk away.

As you enter the Library building, probably the first thing you notice to your right is our Starbucks. (Yes, coffee and other beverages are allowed in the Library, as long as they're in covered containers.) If you take a look to your left, you see the Circulation desk. This is where you go to check out library materials and get materials that your professor has put on "Reserve." We also have laptop computers that you can borrow for use in the Library. The "Circ" desk is also our Lost & Found area.

The Information Commons

As you continue walking forward from the entrance, there are elevators to your left and restrooms to your right, then you enter the Information Commons. The "IC" is a hotbed of activity in the Library. We have a lounge area with tables and chairs for individual and group study. Many students also bring their laptops to the Library because we have wireless access. Turn to the right and walk to the end of the room and you find Media Resources where we have movies and music in multiple formats, audio-books, and music scores. To the left of the study lounge is the Reference Collection, which includes, but is not limited to, dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, and directories. And, next to the Reference Collection is the Reference Desk, where friendly, professional librarians are waiting to help you find the information, books, articles, videos, etc. that you are looking for. The computer lab in the IC is always busy. More than 140 computers are available just for students, plus 17 public access computers. There is also a group work area where the computers have two monitors and the tables are larger to accommodate groups of students working together. Printers, copiers, and scanners are also on hand and, if you have a technical problem, just visit the IC's Academic Computing Help Desk.

Study/Quiet Areas

That's about it for the first floor of the Library. If you're looking for a less active area to read or study, try one of our two designated Quiet Areas, the basement or the second floor. In the basement you find our Government Documents (Florida, U.S. and U.N.) sections, our map collections, and our Reference Annex. The second floor houses our Periodicals Collection. Both of these areas have lots of tables and chairs and the quiet designation is strictly enforced. Have a group of two or more that want a quieter place to study? Go to the Circ Desk and ask for the key to one of our twenty group study rooms located on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th floor.

Our Circulating Collection, the books you may check out, is located on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors. Although not designated as quiet areas, the noise level on these floors is usually low. We also have classroom labs on the 2nd and 3rd floors where we teach library and research skills.

Library Collections

The physical materials within the USF Tampa Library are organized into **collections**. The items in each collection have something in common, such as their availability (whether or not you can check them out), their format (book, periodical, media), their audience (children and young adults), their producer (the Florida state government, the U.S. federal government), or their rarity (Special Collections). Each collection has its own borrowing policies: whether or not you can check the items out of the library, how many items of that type you can check out, and for how long. Here are the most important Library collections for undergraduate students:

- **Circulating Collection** (3rd, 4th, and 5th floor): More than 850,000 books that you can check out and use for your assignments or for any other purpose. *As an undergraduate student, you will probably use this collection more often than any of the other Library collections.*
- **Juvenile Collection** (4th floor): More than 30,000 books written for children and young adults. Students from the College of Education who study children's and young adult literature are the ones who most often use these books, but any student can use and check them out.
- **Starbucks Leisure Collection** (1st floor): A small selection of popular fiction, non-fiction, DVDs, and CDs, designed for you to browse, check out, and enjoy. This collection is located near the entrance to Starbucks.
- **Media Resources** (1st floor): DVDs, CDs, music scores, and other formats of video and audio items that you can check out. There are over 40,000 items in this collection.
- **Reference Collection**, including Ready Reference and the Reference Annex (1st floor and Basement): Books that you can't check out, but that you can use while you are in the Library. You can also photocopy the pages that you need. There

are over 7,000 items in the Reference Collection on the 1st floor, and an additional 6,000 items in the Reference Annex in the Basement.

- **Periodicals** (2nd floor): Newspapers, magazines, and journals in print and microform, which you can't check out but that you can use while you're in the Library. You can also photocopy the pages that you need.
- **U.S. Federal Documents Collection** (Basement): Over 330,000 items produced by all agencies of the U.S. Federal government, including reports, pamphlets, brochures, and maps. Many of these can be checked out, but not all of them can be. You can also photocopy the pages that you need.
- **Florida Documents Collection** (Basement): Nearly 10,000 items produced by the state government of Florida. You can also photocopy the pages that you need.
- **Special Collections** (4th floor): Unique or rare items, sometimes held by no other library in the world. Because these items are rare (and sometimes fragile), they cannot be checked out. Instead, they can be used only in the Reading Room of the Special Collections department under carefully controlled conditions. While researchers from around the world are the ones who most often use these items, USF undergraduate students are also more than welcome to use them as part of their research assignments.

LIBRARY SERVICES

In addition to providing books, magazines, music, movies, etc., the Library is here to serve the students of USF. We're here to help you succeed!

Research Help

One of the frontlines of our service is our librarians. And, we try to make it easy for you to get help from a librarian. Our "Ask a Librarian" service gives you ways to contact a librarian 24/7/365.

Face to face – Stop by the Reference Desk in the Information Commons (IC) to work with librarians eager to help you. This desk is staffed most hours that the Library is open.

Telephone – Can't get to the Library, but still have questions? Call the IC Reference Desk at 813-974-2729. And, if you're out of town you can call us toll free at 866-550-8036.

E-mail – When the Library is closed, you can still "Ask a Librarian". Go to http://tinyurl.com/47ckvm to send your

question via e-mail and we'll usually get back to you within 24 hours.

Online chat - Are you an IMer? The Library has an online chat service at http://tinyurl.com/3jjv9f. Most weekdays, chat is available from 9am-4pm and 6pm-10pm.

Consultations - Schedule a time with a USF librarian for a one-on-one consultation at http://asp.lib.usf.edu/Consultations/RSC.asp.

In addition, all of these contact points are outlined for you on the Library's website. Just click on the "Need Help" button on most of our web pages.

Borrowing Materials

As undergraduates, you can borrow up to 20 renewable items like books for three weeks each. Media items are not renewable and can be borrowed for one week. Just take the items and your USF ID card, which is also your library card, to the Circulation Desk on the 1st floor. If, near the end of the three weeks, you still need the item you can go to the Library website and click on the "Online Renewal", which is located on the purple **Services** tab. Enter your library ID number (the 205 number on your USF ID card) and your birthday in mmdd format.

Interlibrary Loan

If we don't have a book or article that you need, we can get it for you. On the purple **Services** tab, you'll find a link to our Interlibrary Loan service. First, create a free account using the "Not Registered" link. Then fill out the online form for either Article/Photocopy, Book/Loan, or Book Chapter. Depending on where the item is coming from it could arrive in a few days or in 2-4 weeks, so you'll have to plan ahead. You will receive an e-mail message when your item is ready for pick up.

THE BASIC RESEARCH PROCESS

Getting Started

The first step in any kind of research is to have a clear idea of your goal. For most undergraduates, the goal is to produce a paper or presentation on a particular topic in order to fulfill a course research assignment. You should read the research assignment carefully and make certain that you understand exactly what is expected. If you are uncertain about the answers to any of the following questions, ask your instructor immediately:

- What is the final product? An annotated bibliography? A paper? A presentation (by yourself or by a group)? More than one type of product?
- How much freedom do you have in determining your research question, problem, subject, or issue?

- Are there any encouragements or restrictions as to what sources should be used? For instance, are you expected to use a minimum or maximum number of sources of certain types (such as a minimum number of articles from peer-reviewed journals or a maximum number of general websites)?
- When is the final product due? Are there any intermediate due dates (such as an earlier date for providing a list of sources used)?

If you don't yet have a clear idea of your research question, begin by exploring background information about the general area of research, and then getting ideas of how to narrow your research topic to a workable question:

- Read encyclopedias to get an overview of a topic. This can include Wikipedia (especially for popular culture topics), Encyclopedia Britannica (for general academic topics), or specialized encyclopedias (for specific academic topics). You will find many online encyclopedias in the Reference Resources category of Databases on the USF Libraries website.
- Read online news sources to get an overview of a current issue. This can include Google News (news.google.com) for very recent issues, or Access World News (one of the USF Libraries databases) for issues taking place in the past decade or two.
- If you are still struggling with a broad topic, talk to your instructor, to a librarian, or to an expert in the field to help you narrow your topic.

Decide on the best kinds of sources for your assignment (keeping in mind any restrictions set by your instructor):

- Books are a good choice for complex, historical topics.   Even if an entire book has not been written about your topic, a book might contain all or part of a chapter about your topic. To find books on a narrow topic, you'll need to consider what general topic your narrow topic is part of. But books may not be helpful if your topic has only become important in the past year or two.
- Newspaper articles and articles from news magazines (such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*) are a good choice for researching current events, or for seeing how historical events were covered as they were happening.
- Magazine articles are a good choice for researching popular culture at any point in time.
- Journal articles are a good choice for locating the latest academic research on a given topic, especially if the journal is peer-reviewed. This includes scientific experiments and studies.

Evaluating Sources

Information comes from many sources and in many formats. Some are reliable and some are not. Here are some basic things to consider when deciding if an information source is something you should use.

- **Currency / Timeliness** – Is the information current or timely to your need? In books, articles, or media materials, the date of publication is the important data

element. On a website, look for the copyright or last updated date. If a website hasn't been updated lately, you may be able to find a better source.

🍃 **Authority** – Who is the author or publisher of the material? Does the person or organization have a reputation for expertise in the field of study? On websites, look for a contact or about us page. Websites that don't identify an author or publisher may not be reliable.

🍃 **Objectivity / Bias** – Is the author/publisher objective about the topic or is there a discernible bias? For example, a political action committee may not be an objective source of information about government policy.

🍃 **Verifiability** – Can the information provided by a source be verified by other sources? When data can only be found via a single source, the information may be questionable.

For more information go to our "How to… Evaluate Sources" section on the red **Research Help** tab of the Library website.

Smarter Googling

Everybody, even librarians, use Google all the time. However, Google doesn't just provide keyword searches that return 1,584,392 hits. Google has some powerful advanced features that can help you find better information.

Google Scholar – Looking for a scholarly article, but not having any luck? Google Scholar gives you the ability to search in multiple sources across many disciplines. And, if the Library has a subscription to the electronic version of an article, you can access the full text online by clicking on the "Find it @ USF" link.

Google Books – Google and many academic and large public libraries have collaborated to digitize the contents of the libraries' books. Although the entire book may not be available online because of copyright restrictions, Google Books allows you to do keyword searching of the books' contents and to see a preview of the text. In addition, when you find a book that may meet your research needs, Google Books provides a link to "Find this book in a library" that will show you if the USF Library has a copy of the book.

Advanced Search – Using the Google Advanced Search, you can search webpages that contain a list of words, an exact phrase, and one word or another. You can also exclude webpages that contain words you enter. In addition, you can identify a specific domain (e.g., usf.edu, .gov), language, and region and specify where in the webpage to look for the keywords you entered (e.g., title, URL, text, etc.).

Finding Books, etc Using the Libraries Catalog

Books on your topic can be found using the **USF Libraries Catalog**. Go to the USF Libraries website (www.lib.usf.edu) and choose the USF Libraries Catalog

link under the yellow **Resources** tab (the first link). Enter a word (or two or three words) that best describes your topic.

After you click the Search button, you can use the *facets* (the categorized options) on the left-hand side of the screen to narrow your results. You may first want to choose "Book" from the Format category, and either "USF Library-Tampa" (for print books in the USF Tampa Library) or "USF Online Resource" (for online books) from the Library/Collection category. If you choose "USF Library-Tampa", you may also want to choose "Circulating Collection" from the Library/Collection category to limit yourself to those books you can check out and take home. If you still have too many results, you can continue to narrow your results by Subject: Topic, Subject: Time Period, or Subject: Geographic Area. If you are having problems in finding good books for your research topic, you are encouraged to speak to a librarian.

Finding Articles Using Databases

Scholarly, popular press, and newspaper articles can be found using our **databases**. On the Library website, select Databases by Title/Subject on the yellow **Resources** tab. When the "Find Database" page displays, click on the "by Subject" link.
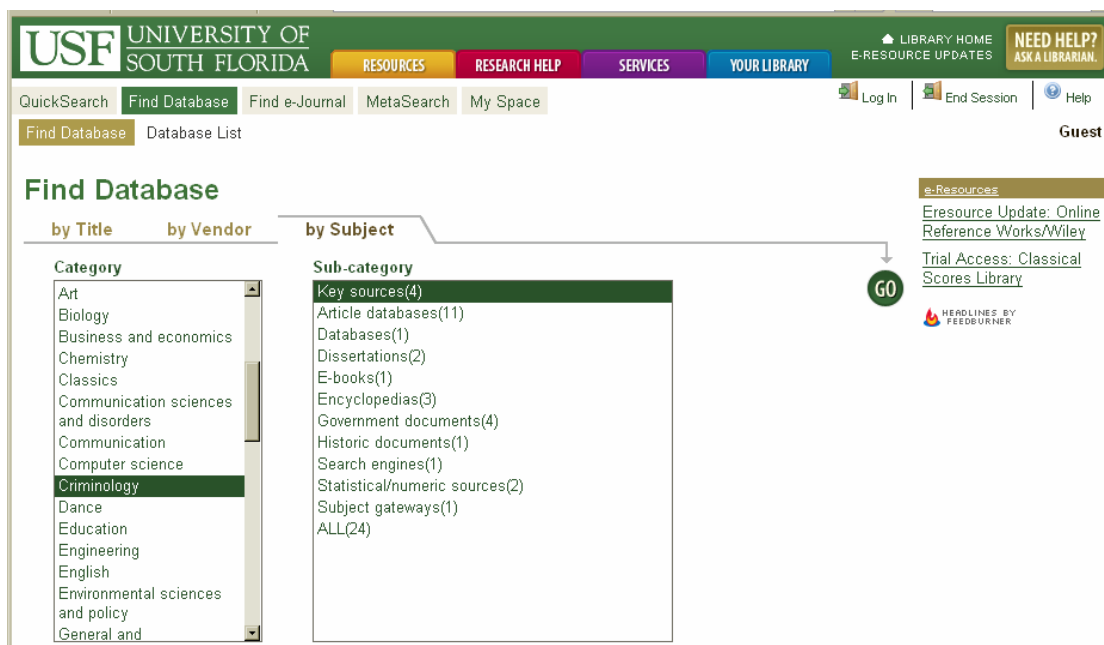
The category list reflects the subject areas that are taught at USF. Select the one that suits your needs. The sub-category list changes depending on which category is selected, but all contain a "Key sources" sub-category. Key sources have been selected by librarians as the best starting places for research in each subject. Select the sub-category you need then click on the Go button. A list of databases will be displayed. To access the database, click on the database name.
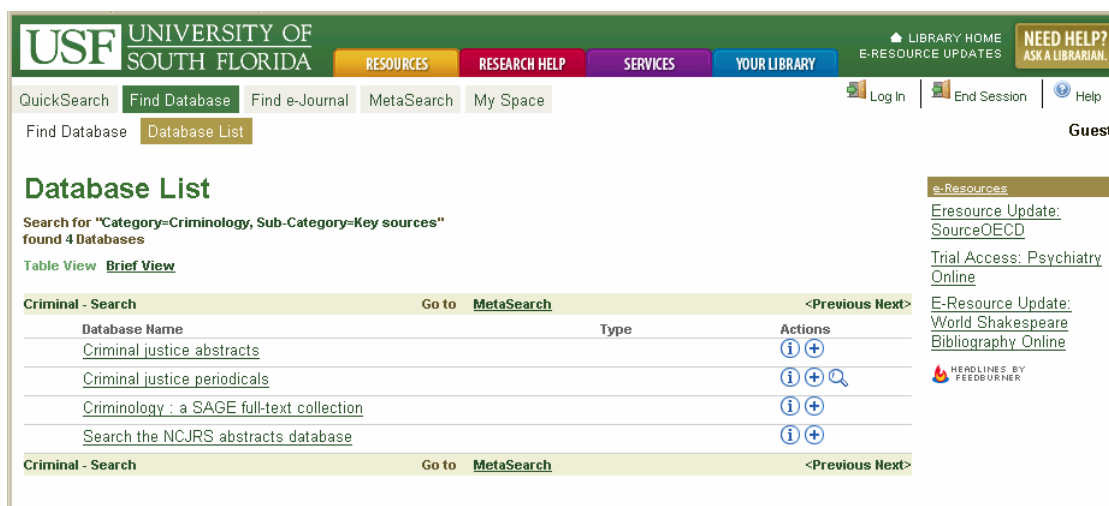
Each database has a different look and feel, but most provided a basic and an advanced search function that allows keyword searching. Many databases provide online full text access to the articles that they list. If you can't find a full text link, look for the Find it @ USF or SFX link. This tool will search for the selected article in all of our databases, then, if it is available online, provide a link to one or more databases that

contain the full text. If we don't have an online version of the article, the tool provides a link to the Library Catalog so that you can find out if we have the print version.

Citing Sources

There are many different styles for citing information sources and different professors prefer different styles. There isn't room in these pages to outline all of your options. Fortunately, on the red **Research Help** tab, the Library provides a "Citing Sources" link. On these pages you will find help sheets for many citation styles including four of the most popular: MLA, APA, Turabian, and Chicago. In addition, writing and annotated bibliography guides are available.

References

Boehle, S. (2007). Audience response systems. *Training (Minneapolis, Minn.), 44*(6), 59.

Yüksel, I. (2008). Global warming and renewable energy sources for sustainable

development in turkey. *Renewable Energy: An International Journal, 33*(4), 802-812.

References

Bryant, J. A., Martin, A., & Slay, J. (2007). Partners with a vision: Librarians and faculty

collaborate to develop a library orientation program at a non-traditional campus.

The Southeastern Librarian, 55(1), 14-25.