Sociology Research

Starting your research

A good place to start a research project, is with something that interests you. If you are not sure where to start, try looking at the table of contents in a text book, or flipping through an encyclopedia on your subject such as The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology https://www.library.oit.edu:2443/login?url=http://orbis.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=624726 or World of Sociology https://www.library.oit.edu:2443/login?url=http://www.credoreference.com/book/worldsocs


Some sources for starting your research are


Finding sources

There is more than just knowing where to look to find resources for your project. Try some of these search tips to get better results:

- Boolean operators: using the words AND, OR, and NOT to connect your search terms will get you more or less results. The graphic shows a search for (red or blue) not yellow. This would return everything in the red, blue, and
purple areas, but nothing in the yellow. If the search were instead (red and blue) not yellow, it
would return only those resources in the purple area.

- Synonyms: The people who decide what subject and keywords describe each item in your
search results may not think like you or I. It is helpful to think of some synonyms for your search
terms if you are not finding useful results.

- Subject terms: Subject terms are the resource specific terms used to describe a source. For
example, the Library of Congress subject that includes Sociology are General Sociology and
Social History, Problems, and Reform. Another related subject is Family, Marriage, Women. Look
for a thesaurus for the resource you are searching in. This will help you identify subject terms for
your topic. Many electronic resources also offer suggested subjects based on the keywords you
enter in your search.

- Citation searching: This type of search is useful if you already know a bit about what you are
researching. You can look up to see who has cited a specific source, as well as looking at that
sources reference to see where they got their information. Another form of citation searching is
finding articles that cite the works of a specific author/creator. This is useful when you know
the name of a subject expert.

Where to find resources

Knowing where to go for resources will save you time. While a general internet search will return many
resources, the following will return subject specific resources. When you find something Oregon Tech
does not own try borrowing it from another library. http://www.oit.edu/libraries/find/books/borrowing-
from-another-library Make sure to use your Oregon Tech email address to that articles can be sent to
you.

Electronic Resources

Find these electronic resources and more in this alphabetical list http://www.oit.edu/libraries/find/articles/a-
z You can also search the library catalog for articles and books on a topic: http://www.oit.edu/library-catalog though this is a more
general search. You will need to logon with your Oregon Tech logon and password when prompted.

- Sage Journals Online – Browse journals by Discipline – Sociology is under Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Social Sciences Abstracts
- Wiley Interscience

Journals – The electronic resources above allow you to search for journal articles by topic. If you want to
narrow it to some specific journal titles try:


What is wrong with Wikipedia? It is important to check where the
information in a Wikipedia article comes from. Anyone can write and
update an article. Go to the bottom of
the page, and check the references to verify the information before you use

Last Updated – April 2013, DMLW
• British Journal of Sociology http://oregontech.worldcat.org/oclc/51205578
• Rural Sociology
  • Electronic Journal of Sociology http://www.sociology.org/

Books - Books and other items are listed in the Library Catalog
http://oregontech.worldcat.org/advancedsearch. Use the Library Catalog to find materials in the Oregon Tech Libraries' collections and through the Summit. Summit provides access to materials from 36 academic libraries in Oregon and Washington for Oregon Tech students, faculty and staff.

See the subjects and suggested Library of Congress call number ranges below:

• HM General Sociology
• HN Social History, Problems, and Reform

Selected Websites

• Google Scholar scholar.google.com
• Sociopedia.isa http://www.sagepub.net/isa/admin/free-articles.aspx
• International Sociological Association http://www.isa-sociology.org/
• American Sociological Association http://www.asanet.org/
• The Pacific Sociological Association http://www.pacificsoc.org/
• Writers Guild of America – Documentary Film and Nonfiction Programming http://www.wga.org/organizesub.aspx?id=1123
• Sociology through Documentary Film http://sociologythroughdocumentaryfilm.pbworks.com/w/page/17194965/FrontPage
• Find by subject: Statistics http://www.oit.edu/libraries/find/subject/statistics

Evaluating your sources

As you are searching for sources you should be evaluating them. You want to look at how relevant the information is to your topic, as well as the date of publication, the type of publication, and the author/creator.

Relevancy – This is the first check when evaluating your sources, and probably something you are doing already. Make sure the source has something to do with your topic. If you are doing a project on sociology of the internet, you would not cite Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland. The electronic resources, Library catalog, and search engines you use will start this process for you when you enter your subject or keywords. You can increase the relevancy of articles you are finding by using a few search techniques (see Finding resources for some tips).
Date – The date of creation or publication of the resource could be very important depending on your topic. If you are researching the history of a topic older resources may work perfectly fine. However, if you want the newest technique, you will also want the latest resources available.

Type – There are many types of resources you can use. These get into more detail than book or periodical, and each one may be a little different than the last. These are some general types of resources.

- Books – Tend to be more detailed and take longer to write and publish than journal articles.
- E-books – While access may be easier with an e-book, publishers are treating them the same as print books when it comes to publication time.
- Images – a photograph or drawing can say a lot.
- Lecture – Whether attending a class or listening to a special speaker, a lecture is information given by an expert in the field.
- Popular Magazine – This is something you would pick up for general interest or entertainment reading.
- Reference books – there are different types of reference books such as the encyclopedia or the almanac. In general, reference works will have an overview of information on a topic.
- Scholarly Journal – This is where you would find current research in a field. A subset of the scholarly journal is a peer reviewed journal. Peer review means that the articles have been blind reviewed by other experts in the field before publication.
- Trade publications – These are generally published by an organization such as the American Sociological Association.
- Website – A website is a group of pages published electronically on the internet. While many organizations and publishers have websites, it is important to note the ease of which an individual can create their own website with content on any subject

Author/Creator/Publisher – See who wrote and who published the resource. Authors and creators tend to leave their opinions in their research whether they intend to or not. As for publishers, some specialty publishers and organizations look for materials that align with their beliefs. An example would be the Christian Science Monitor, or the National Rifle Association.
Citing sources and Information Ethics

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else’s work. This includes your fellow students to famous researchers and everyone in between. It also includes information published in any medium whether it is an image, a journal article, a lecture, or a web page. Citing your sources in-text and in a reference page or bibliography will keep you from plagiarizing.

Citing In text

Paraphrase or summarize a thought by rewriting it in your own words. You will still need to cite it, but not as a quote.

Example: In his literature review, Brickell cites Hiller and Harrison, that the internet offers groups a way to try and test out sexual identities. Later he states that these same sexual minorities can be marginalized in electronic environments. (Brickell .2012)

You can also quote a resource. Depending on the length of the quote and the citation style you are using you may need to separate quoted text from the rest of your document.

Example: “While the internet may not displace inequality or varied modes of regulation, its ‘interaction orders’ do open up new spaces through which power and resistance can circulate.” (Brickell. 2012)

It is common to use a combination of these techniques in your projects.

Reference list or Bibliography

You may be required to write a reference list in a specific style. Try the resources on the citing sources page to help you - http://www.oit.edu/libraries/help/citing-sources. Many electronic resources can help you with proper citations when you are finding your resources. Look for this option when you are searching. The above two in text citation examples are APA style. The following is an APA style citation of the journal article they are from: