

## Research Tip #1: Finding Your Sources

You might be tempted to start your research online, using Google, Yahoo, or Wikipedia to search for your topic. And that's not a bad idea, if all you want is a quick sense of the issue. Just remember that things online can be written by pretty much anybody with no guarantee that what they say is significant, accurate, or based in fact.

College research is about finding sources of information that help you sift what's significant from what's not important. It's about finding more accurate sources of information targeted to your specific question. Ultimately, it's about learning to evaluate the information out there to come up with a reasoned conclusion that makes the most sense of the evidence. That's a tall order, especially in a 10-week quarter. But there are a couple of short-cuts you can use that guarantee good results AND spare you a lot of wasted time:

### 1. Use an online database

Consider this the college equivalent of Google. You start with a database that indexes articles and books in the subject you're researching. This gives you huge advantages over Google: the database is entirely about your subject, and the sources include professional, targeted pieces about your specific topic. Here's how to do it:

- Go to the library Web site, [www.scu.edu/library](http://www.scu.edu/library)
- In the Quicklinks column at the left, find Databases. Click on the blue arrow next to "Choose Subject," and scroll down to "Religious Studies." Highlight that and click on the double red arrow to the right.
- This brings up a window with all SCU's online databases. My favorite is the ATLA Religion Database + ATLAS, because it's one of the most comprehensive. Click on that. [You might have to type in your name and Access card number (on the back of your Access card) to access the database.]
- Now type your search terms in the windows at the top. You can use the pop-up windows to the right to specify where you want the database to look for that information (in the title field, author field, etc.). You can also use the "Search Options" below to specify that you only want to search, say, for articles, or only book reviews, or articles-books-essays all at once (hold down the shift key to select more than one option). Check the box next to "Scholarly (peer-reviewed) Journals" to limit your search to professional publications. Then hit the search button that's near the top, to the right of your search terms.
- You should see a page, or many pages, of results. If you've got too many results, you might need to restrict your search a little more, or add another search term to narrow the search. Scan the results. Check the box next to each entry that looks useful. When you're done scanning your search results, you can print the entries you checked, or email them to yourself, or save them in a file. Do whatever you need to do to keep a record of the ones that look useful: you'll need that bibliographic information to locate the article and to reference the article for your assignment.
- The database might have a PDF file of the article you want; if so, open that up and either print it or save an e-copy to your computer or flash drive to read later.

### 2. Use a recent encyclopedia

Find a recent encyclopedia targeted to your religion or topic. Locate entries related to your research question. Here's the great thing: the author of the article has basically done your work for you, that is, locating the most important sources on your issue and summarizing them for you in an unbiased way. But remember: the more recent the encyclopedia, the better, because you want current material in your bibliography. You'll need to use an electronic database to find articles published after the encyclopedia. Make a note of the entry's author (usually listed at the end of the entry), since you'll cite this source in your bibliography by article author, title of entry, and then the book information. Here are some of the encyclopedias in our library:

- Collins, John J., Bernard McGinn and Stephen J. Stein, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 vols. New York: Continuum, 1998. Reserve BL501 .E53 1998
- Ferguson, Everett. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2 vols. New York: Garland, 1997. Ref BR 162.2 .E53 1997
- Jones, Lindsay, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 15 vols. San Francisco: Thomson Gale, 2005. [The library has the older first edition, but the Religious Studies Department has the current edition.]
- Martin, Richard C. *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA/Thomson/Gale, 2004. Online
- McBrien, Richard P. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. Ready Ref BX 841 .H37 1995
- Schiffman, Lawrence H. and James C. VanderKam, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Ref lower level BM487 .E53 2000
- van Lent, J. and H.-U. Qureshi, comps. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, ed. P. J. Bearman. New York: E. J. Brill, 1995-.
- Wigoder, Geoffrey, ed. *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

For more encyclopedias, do a keyword search at [www.scu.edu/library](http://www.scu.edu/library) Quicklinks (left column) for encyclopedia religion, and see what pops up.

### 3. Find a recent book or article about your topic

With the help of the database or the encyclopedia, locate a single recent book or article about your precise question or topic that's professional/peer-reviewed. Get a hold of that article or book. Scan its footnotes or bibliography for other articles on your subject.

Again, the advantage of peer-reviewed, professional sources for YOU is that the author should have done a lot of your work for you.

- They should have sifted the important sources from the popular ones
- They should have read everything important about your topic
- They should cite fully every source they read
- They should summarize the state of the question for you at the beginning of their piece before launching into their particular thesis.

#### Popular vs. Professional Sources How do you tell the difference?

Popular sources are articles published frequently (daily, weekly, monthly) with time for only minimal review, or books published by presses that cater to the mass market (like Doubleday or Harper).

Professional sources are articles published in professional journals that come out only 2, 3 or 4 times a year, and that are reviewed by peers (scholars in the field) before they are approved for publication. They are books published by university presses and other presses catering to a professional audience (for example, Continuum, Fortress, Brill, Westminster John Knox, Abingdon). Sometimes very good books are also published by popular presses.

If you don't know whether a book or article is professional,

- Take the library's [online tutorial](#).
- Check the Religious Studies Department Web site's [journal listing](#), which differentiates between academic (= professional, peer-reviewed) and popular sources
- Ask your professor

## Research Tip #2: Getting Your Sources

So you've found your sources in the ATLA Database, an encyclopedia, or a good professional article or book. Now you need to get a hold of them. Here's how.

# A.

Check our library catalog online first ([www.scu.edu/library](http://www.scu.edu/library)).

1. Locate "Quicklinks" in the upper left corner, and "OSCAR - Library Catalog" right below it. Select "Title" from the drop-down menu, and type your book or journal title in the window. Click the red arrow to the immediate right of your title.
2. Click on your title (sometimes, this takes a little drilling down if Oscar comes back with several similar titles), and identify where the book is. If it says Main Stacks, that's the basement of the library, and you can retrieve it yourself. If there's a red "Request from ARS" button, that's the automated retrieval facility; click on the button to order the book to Circulation. Enter your "Last Name, First Name" and hit the submit button. The book will be delivered to the Circulation Desk within a ½ hour.

# B.

If our library doesn't have the:

Book	Journal Article	Chapter in Book
<p style="text-align: center;">1. Click on the "Search Link+ button."</p> <p><i>If the title shows up</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Click on the title. You'll see a full record of the book with links beneath indicating how many Link+ libraries have the book, and another link reading REQUEST ITEM. Click on REQUEST ITEM.</li> <li>3. Select "Santa Clara Univ" (not Santa Clara City Public!) from the drop-down menu for the various institutions in the Link+ consortium (they need to know which one you're affiliated with).</li> <li>4. Type your full name as it appears on your Access card and the barcode on the back, starting with 25098... (not the same as your student ID # on the front); hit submit (or the enter key); now the Pickup institution should automatically read "Santa Clara Univ" and the Pickup location should automatically read "Orradre Circulation Desk" (the circulation desk in the library).</li> <li>5. Hit the Submit button. You'll receive an email to your scu.edu account when the book arrives (3-7 days).</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">1. Click on the "Search Link+ button."</p> <p><i>If the title doesn't show up:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Go back to <a href="http://www.scu.edu/library">www.scu.edu/library</a></li> <li>3. Under the yellow tab titled "Our Services" (top right/center), click on "Bronco Express (Interlibrary Loan)."</li> <li>4. Click on "a book."</li> <li>5. Type your full name as it appears on your Access card and the barcode on the back, starting with 25098... (not the same as your student ID # on the front); hit submit (or the enter key).</li> <li>6. Fill in the fields with the bibliographic information for the book; in the "cited in" field, type in that you were unable to locate the book in Link+ (this saves the Bronco Express staff a step).</li> <li>7. Hit the submit button. You'll receive an email when the book arrives, usually 2-3 weeks.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go to <a href="http://www.scu.edu/library">www.scu.edu/library</a>.</li> <li>2. Under the yellow tab titled "Our Services" (top right/center), click on Bronco Express (Interlibrary Loan).</li> <li>3. Click on "a journal article."</li> <li>4. Type your full name as it appears on your Access card and the barcode on the back, starting with 25098... (not the same as your student ID # on the front); hit submit (or the enter key).</li> <li>5. Fill in the fields with the bibliographic information for your source; use the default delivery method at the bottom, "Groupwise Email attachment."</li> <li>6. Repeat for each of your other sources.</li> <li>7. Hit the submit button. You'll receive an email with the attached article once it's been scanned at another library and sent; this usually takes about 3-7 days.</li> </ol> <p>Same directions as for Journal article, but at step 3, click on "a chapter in a book" instead of "a journal article."</p>