English 321, Writing II, Beginning Technical Writing.
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Research Worksheet

Find link to this research worksheet (PDF file) at **http://courses.missouristate.edu/dlh105f/.** (Look for file under English 321.)

Please carefully print in each of the following blanks:

Your name _____ Your Bearmail address printed (no other email address is

acceptable) _____

Your major _____ Department _____

Check type of major project: _____report on a practitioner problem; _____ feasibility study

of doing a professional document; _____ professional document and report; _____ feasibility study for a major purchase

Note: This document is a guide that can be adapted to help you with researching any subject for any project. This document contains hyperlinks to resources, and these links have been checked. If a link does not work, try using Google to locate the current Internet address (URL).

INTRODUCTION

Each of the major project options requires significant research. For example, if you create a professional document, you must research the **type of document** and the **appropriate subject matter of its content.** Be sure to understand all other handouts explaining the subject of this research and specifications for the proposal, progress report, the major written project, and the oral report. Research requires you to find a project that truly interests you and is suitable for the assignment's requirements because identifying and obtaining the best information requires a time-consuming "labor of love."

This project will enable you to learn a great deal about your subject and various resources for research. These resources include printed and electronic directories, catalogs, and other databases that index publications. Electronic resources may be databases accessed on CD-ROM or through the Internet. Some information may come from World Wide Web sites in addition to Internet-accessed databases. These resources are the keys to locating the printed, digital, and human sources that can provide the best specific information for your project.

Research is messy, hard work. There is no established, lock-step formula for the process. Yet, without some kind of plan, researchers may fail to identify and use the most appropriate sources; or researchers may find information, but the process will be more troublesome and time consuming than necessary. Even well-planned research, however, may lead to dead ends, require retracing steps, and necessitate ongoing searching even after the writing process has begun. Thus, you will need to devote serious and frequent time to this work (some work each day possible), but you will learn greatly from it.

Certain printed and electronic resources are housed in or accessed through Meyer Library and are available only to the Missouri State community through Meyer Library's Web site (http://www.library.missouristate.edu). Thus, you need to become familiar (or, re-familiar) with the various resources available through Missouri State's library page. Begin it today. Identifying, locating, and using in-house and electronic databases accessed through the Internet will require you to consult with Meyer's reference librarians http://library.missouristate.edu/forms/reference/consultations.htm. Their help is essential for you to expand and refine your knowledge of resources and skill in using them.

This research worksheet has two main purposes:

1. **To provide a comprehensive, systematic approach to the research of this course.** This worksheet is intended to help you organize the research process and to ensure that you will not overlook or poorly use sources, for example, key journals.

2. **To document your research process**

This worksheet covers the various kinds of resources that you are required to use in the research process. The progress report will require you to cite a number of specific sources that you will identify by using this worksheet. Make copies or printouts of any information generated by this worksheet.

TYPES OF SOURCES THAT MUST BE CITED IN THE PROGRESS REPORT

The following is a list of kinds of sources that you will be required to cite in the progress report. **For each specific source cited in the progress report, you will be required to state the keyword/keyphrase used and the database, e.g., EBSCOhost, SWAN, OCLC, etc., searched that led you to identify the specific source, e.g., book, journal article, Web site, etc. You will also briefly describe how the source specifically contributes to the subject being researched.** The types of sources listed below are also mentioned in various respective places in this worksheet:

- Six (6) electronic commercial databases accessed through the Missouri State University's Meyer Library. These are not Google, Yahoo!, or other non-commercial (free) resources for searching the Internet. You must use databases specified in this worksheet and others suggested by Missouri State reference librarians. These databases are essential in searching for books and journal articles. See the Missouri State Meyer Library's catalog of indexes and databases: http://library.missouristate.edu/databases/index.htm.

- Eight (8) books: seven (7) on your subject, including textbooks, and one (1) guide to documentation format/style used in your field or such other as *MLA* and *APA*. For books citations you will need the name of the author, title, place of publication, publisher, and date. Names of databases to search for books are given later in this worksheet;

- Eight (8) journal articles. These may be traditionally published in print or online. Sometimes journal articles appear in both print and online media. For journal articles you will need the name of the author, title of journal, title of article, volume/issue numbers, date, and page numbers. Strategies for identifying journal titles are given later in this worksheet;

- Four (4) credible Web sites. Credible Web sites are those published by educational institutions, professional associations, and well-established, reputable companies. Especially look for .org and .edu in Web site addresses;

- One (1) credible message board or listserv. According to *Researching Online*, "a *listserv*, also known as *mailing list*, *list*, or *group* is a program [or "site"] that allows e-mail to be sent to a group of addresses simultaneously. . . . Though listservs vary according to function, type, and administration, each listserv defines a narrow subject area which all posts are expected to fall within" (p. 22). Professional and practitioner associations often sponsor listservs, so finding Web sites of these associations will help you identify listservs, but later in this worksheet other ways of locating discussion groups will be suggested; and

- Evidence of feedback from one (1) academic subject-matter expert (SME), i.e., instructor, and one (1) reference librarian at Missouri State. The evidence of feedback must be either a signature on paper (see signature block at end of this worksheet) or an email message original copy with headers showing your

email address, email address of the respondent, and date. The verification of the feedback will be placed at the end of project 4, the progress report.

RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Throughout this research process, you will be using human resources (academic advisors, other instructors, and practitioners) and computer access to databases such as in-house catalogs and indexes. **Some databases may require you to use the Web site of Meyer Library as a "portal" to access commercial databases made available to you as a student at Missouri State.** Of course, the Internet also affords access to electronic resources other than databases available in or through Meyer Library. Consider using the following non-commercial resources for Internet searching:

http://www.google.com (and its Scholar search feature); http://www.profusion.com; Yahoo! http://www.yahoo.com; Library of Congress's Meta-index http://www.loc.gov/index.html; WWW Virtual Library http://www.vlib.org/; and The Argus Clearinghouse http://www.clearinghouse.net/ (Irvine, 58-64).

Successful research requires you to become familiar with some of the specialized language of the field being researched. Also, you will need to be able to think of synonyms and words and phrases that go from general to specific and vice versa. **Keyword resourcefulness is vital in searching databases and the Internet. Finding appropriate keywords requires ongoing conversations with people in your field and with reference librarians as well as continual reading for new insights.**

Students researching a problem of practitioners in their field will need to identify the various kinds of practitioners in a given field based on their jobs. The more kinds of practitioners you can identify, the more problems you can consider (and **keywords** used to research them). Once you have focused on a certain kind of practitioner, you will need to communicate with people who are knowledgeable about the given field. These people are academics, including academic advisors and other professors, and practitioners. Professors have knowledge of textbooks and academic journals used by their peers and by students; professors may or may not also have knowledge of the journals, newsletters, and trade books used by practitioners and the professional associations practitioners belong to.

1. Early in their research, students researching a practitioner problem would do well to obtain appointments to speak to one or more instructors in an appropriate field (do not limit yourself to an academic advisor assigned to you; consult with other instructors and practitioners). Ask them for suggested subjects for research and information about professional literature, such as titles of textbooks, titles of academic and practitioner journals, electronic databases that index these journals, and names and contact information of former students now working as practitioners. **(Each major project option requires communication with a practitioner, and verification of it is part of the major report.)** The professional literature of an appropriate field is vital to your ability to identify and consider the problems, issues, and needs experienced by practitioners.

2. To identify various kinds of practitioners related to your project, use the online version of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm.

3. You will want to print out information so that you can use it for reference in order to come up with keywords to use in searching other resources. **Below, list several kinds of practitioners related to this project. Also, as potential keywords for searching, after each practitioner type, specify tasks, duties:**

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4. Search for textbooks and other books (often called "trade books") relating to your major project. Conduct searches for books by using

- *Books in Print* (it has an online version). Consult subject headings of *Books in Print*. Find and see publishers' catalogs for titles (most publishers have Web sites with searchable catalogs).

- MOBIUS Union Catalog. Note: **Use Mobius to obtain books and journal articles not available in Meyer or through the Internet. See Missouri State University Library Web site.**

- OCLC FirstSearch's WorldCat

    a. Consider the chapter titles in the table of contents for potential research subjects and keywords. Look at the index (back of book).

    b. Read selected chapters or passages.

    c. See bibliographies for titles of journals and articles and other books. Bibliographies will be located after individual chapters as well as at the end of the book. Look at the index to search for topic and keyword ideas. See bibliographies in trade books for titles of journals and articles and other books, including names of publishers.

    The progress report will require you to cite at least books somehow relating to your subject. These books do not have to be entirely devoted to your subject. These books may have a chapter or part of a chapter with relevant information. Such information may simply provide background. The book citations in your progress report will require you to specify author, full title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, relevant page numbers.

5. Identify the standard guide or handbook relating to your major project. Use this reference work as a guide to style and documentation for your major project written report. For a professional document, this reference work could be a guide to preparing the given type of document. If no guide is published for/by your field, how do writers in your field handle the need for a reference on documentation? Is a guide used from some other field?

6. Find and use journals, magazines, and newsletters read by academics and practitioners. These are the materials in which practitioners discuss and learn about current and problematic concerns. (Some fields have journals used by both academics and practitioners.) **The bibliographies of textbooks and trade books in your field may help you to identify academic and practitioner periodicals.**

    Some journals targeted to practitioners may not be familiar to academics. **To identify these practitioner journals and other published resources, you will have to find the professional associations of practitioners in your field and their Web sites.** One way to locate practitioner associations is to use an appropriate guide or directory**,** such as ***The Encyclopedia of Associations,*** to obtain contact information, including regular addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and Web site addresses. Web sites will provide information about titles of journals and magazines. Web sites may also offer a way to search and access (or request) back issues or sample copies. Often, practitioner associations have printed and/or online catalogs of books, videos, cassette tapes, CD-ROM materials, and software used by practitioners for professional development (training). A hot topic in technical communication is computer-based training (CBT).

Sometimes very current and appropriate information about practitioner problems, issues, and needs may be found in the newsletters of local chapters of practitioner associations. These publications often are not indexed by databases. Newsletters may be available online at the Web sites of local chapters. Of course, to locate these chapters and their Web sites, you will first have to identify the main practitioner professional associations and their Web sites.

For subsequent parts of this worksheet, after you have identified an academic or practitioner journal or magazine, you will need to identify electronic databases that index that particular journal or magazine. An index is a resource that allows you to search for articles on specific subjects in numerous or all issues of that journal.

CRITICAL NOTE: Use TDNet to enter a journal's title and find what databases index that journal. A link to TDNet is given under "Find" on Meyer Library's homepage: http://library.missouristate.edu/.

Name the academic field most closely related to your subject of research:
_____

Keywords relating to this subject-matter field: Throughout this research, keep track of the keywords, including key phrases, used. The progress report turned in with this worksheet will require you to explain your keywords-- how you discovered, devised, and used them. Use the spaces below to keep track of the story of your use of key words evolved throughout every step and phase of this research.
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Keywords relating to a document type if your project option involves one:
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7. **Name the main professional association of <u>practitioners</u> in a field relating to your project. Use *The Encyclopedia of Associations*. Also, of course, use keyword searches of the Internet.**

   a. Name of practitioner association

   _____

   b. Address

   _____

   c. Title of principal journal or magazine of this association

   _____

   d. Name of a database used through Meyer Library that indexes this publication:

   _____

   e. Keywords used to search this database:

   _____

_____

8. Name a major professional association of <u>academics</u> in the academic field most relevant to the subject of your research.

    a. Name _____

    b. Address _____

    c. Does this academic association also include practitioners? Yes _____ No _____ Explain
    _____

    d. Title of principal journal or magazine of this association _____

    e. Name of a database used through Meyer Library that indexes this publication:

      _____

    f. Keywords used to search this database:

_____

_____

9. Identify a third periodical--journal, magazine, or newsletter-- of importance to your subject not previously cited in this worksheet. To identify such a periodical, consult bibliographies in other journals, textbooks, and trade books. Communicate with academics and practitioners to find such a publication.

    a.   Title of periodical: _____

    b. Check the primary audience(s): Academics _____ Practitioners ____ Both _____

    c. Publisher and place of publication _____

    d. Name of a database used through Meyer Library that indexes this publication:

    _____

    e. Keywords used to search this database:

_____

_____

10. Consider how many database indexes of journals you have used up to this point. As needed, seek help from a reference librarian to determine other databases to search.

11. If you did not previously identify a listserv or message board (news group) that is relevant to your subject of research, identify one here. Access such mailing list search engines as http://www.list-universe.com**. Also, access Google's Groups at** http://www.google.com/grphp?hl=en&tab=wg&q= **. Search these resources by keywords.**

12. Locate Web sites of companies and non-profit organizations relating to the field whose subject you are researching. These Web sites may not have information relating usefully to the specific subject of your research, but these pages will at least verify that you looked at these sites for such information. These Web

sites may be those created by individuals (academics or practitioners), academic departments or programs, governmental organizations, other not-for-profit organizations, or private industry. What colleges and universities have the most extensive and informative Web sites in the academic field most relevant to the subject of research?

   Resources for finding Web sites in private industry are Open Market's Commercial Web Sites Index (http://www.directory.net) (Irvine 64) and the Web site of Thomas Register (http://www.thomasregister.com).

13. Obtain various other kinds of relevant printed publications, for example, reports, brochures, white papers, and booklets.

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WORKS CITED

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Branscomb, H. Eric. *Casting Your Net: A Student's Guide to Research on the Internet*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

Irvine, Martin. *Web Works: A Quick-Reference Guide to Getting on and Navigating the Internet and the World Wide Web*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Munger, David, and Shireen Campbell. *Researching Online*, 5th ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

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REQUIRED VERIFICATION OF HELP SOUGHT

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   Note to those signing: your signature does not mean that you approve the quality of the work. Your signature only verifies that the student had a face-to-face meeting with you to seek your input.

Name of academic advisor (or other professor) (print)_____

Signature of academic advisor _____Date:_____

Advisor's email address (print)_____

Name of reference librarian (print) _____

Signature of reference librarian _____ Date: _____

Reference librarian's email address (print) _____