SEARCHING FOR SOURCES
by
Betty La France

Not all sources are created equal. It is up to you to locate credible sources from who you can learn. Typically, one searchers for sources to compile information in order to write a research paper. Where to find credible sources is crucial in writing a high quality research paper that provides compelling arguments for the position the writer takes in the manuscript. To accomplish this task, the following guidelines should be followed.

First, you need to determine what concepts you are interested in and understand that multiple terms may be used for that concept. For example, if you wanted to write a paper about emotions and communication you may have to perform a key term search using the terms affect and feelings along with communication. A good place to start looking for key terms associated with your paper is the course textbook.

Second, you need to determine the best sources from where to draw the information you need. Research papers should be written using *academic* sources. This includes articles from peer-reviewed journals as well as books. Note, in general, textbooks should *not* be used as sources because they contain information that can be obtained from the original author. Books and peer-reviewed journals typically contain information written by original authors. Any other types of sources (e.g., newspapers, magazines) should be used sparingly (less than 5% of the reference page should contain references to these types of sources).

Third, you need to determine what databases will be the most effective and efficient for you to find quality sources. With the advent of the Internet, searching for sources has never been easier. Unfortunately, knowing which databases are most useful can be tricky. The UM-St.Louis Library system has several databases that contain academic sources. These include: EBSCO Host, PsychInfo, Proquest, ComIndex and ComSearch. Note, ComIndex and ComSearch are databases that contain articles from the discipline's top journals. Unfortunately, these databases are accessible only at specific computers housed in the library. By contrast, EBSCO Host, PsychInfo, and Proquest are available through your dial-up connection to UM-St.Louis. Make sure that when you use EBSCO Host and Proquest that you search specifically for peer-reviewed, academic articles. Thankfully, many journals are now available online. Journal of Applied Communication Research, Human Communication Research, Communication Research, Communication Education, Communication Monographs, Communication Quarterly, Communication Reports, Journal of Communication, and Journal of Health Communication are available online.

Forth, you need to be a critical consumer of research found using general Internet search engines such as Google, Infoseek, NBCi, etc. These search engines do not contain any parameters for searching for academic sources. Thus, the information collected from the Internet must be scrutinized closely. Anyone with access to a computer and knowledge of website construct can post information on the internet. Take great care when using information from the internet.