# RESEARCH TIPS

Step 1: What are the ‘parts’ of your topic?

Before starting your research, look at the words you used to state your topic. ***What are the “parts” of your topic?*** For example, if you were researching the effect of war protest on the 2008 presidential election, you would be interested in presidential politics, protest movements, and various aspects of current wars.

Once you have formulated your topic, think of the bare-bones words that you would use to describe it. These will be the *keywords* you will enter into various computer systems to search for information on your topic. For example, keywords related to the previous topic would include: Presidential election, presidential race, Obama, McCain, Iraq war, Afghanistan war, protest, or words that describe different variations of the same idea.

Step 2: Find books

1. Start with the library’s home page at <http://www.uhd.edu/library/>.
2. In the search box, choose the tab labeled **Catalog**.
3. This takes you to a screen where you can do a **keyword search**. This will search for materials that have your search words anywhere in the description of the item, in the title, author, or subject of the book.
4. After searching, a list of items should appear on the screen. If you see a title that looks like it might be useful, check if it says DOWNTOWN in the box under LOCATION and IN LIBRARY under status. If it says DOWNTOWN GENERAL COLL, write down the call number from the next column then, you can look for the call number in the South Tower of the 5th floor of the library.
5. The catalog searches the UHD library as well as those from the U of H central campus and U of H Clear Lake. To only see materials from the UHD library choose **Limit by UHD** in the **Location** box. Or, to have a book delivered here from one of the other libraries, click on the title, then the box labeled “request” in the upper left corner of the screen.
6. If the book does not have a call number, and has an icon of a computer next to it, labeled **e-book** or **e-resource**, this is an electronic book that you can read on your computer. Click on the title, then on the link that says something like **UHD Users: Click Here for Access**. You can do this from any internet accessible computer, 24 hours a day!

Step 3: Find articles in journals or magazines

1. From the library home page, choose the tab labeled **Databases.**
2. The Library has many different electronic databases, which are online tools that search a group of magazines, journals, or newspapers for articles. If you know the name of the database, you can click on the first letter of its name. If you don’t know which database you want, then select the **Browse by Subject** to see a listing of databases by topical area.
3. After selecting the database, type in search terms or keywords and hit the search button.
4. Depending on the database you are using, the results may display differently. But look for options to change or narrow your search, or to view the **full text** of your articles. Full text articles are available to be read immediately on your computer. You can then print, save, or email them.
5. You can do all of this from any internet accessible computer, 24 hours a day!

**If I have a citation for an article, how do I find a copy of the article?**

* Go to the library Web site at <http://www.uhd.edu/library/> and select *List of Journals*. Enter the title of the journal that you are looking for. Do not enter the title of the article.
* If UHD subscribes to the journal online you will see links that will take you to electronic copies of the journal, from where you can search for or browse to your particular article.
* If UHD subscribes to the journal in printed form, you will see a note saying which years we have. These will be shelved in the *Periodicals* section of the library, in alphabetical order by journal title.
* If the library does not have the journal in print or electronic form, or the article you are looking for is not included in the library’s coverage of that journal title, then you can request that a copy of the article be sent to you through **Interlibrary Loan.**

Step 4: LibSearch

* **LibSearch** is a new service provided by the library that searches most of our books and article databases at the same time. To use LibSearch, type your search terms into the search box that first appears in the center of the screen when you go to the library’s web page.
* You will be able to choose ways to narrow your search from the options on the left side of the screen showing your results.
* When you see an item marked **full text** or **e-book** you will be able to read it online by clicking on the title of the item, then following a series of links to the full text of the article or book.

Evaluate the quality of your information

Because anyone can publish information, particularly on the web, it is important to be able to evaluate its reliability and whether it is appropriate for your research. Consider all of the following when evaluating a book, article, or web site:

**Authority:**

* Who wrote it?
* What are his/her qualifications?
* Is he/she an expert on the topic?
* Who published it?
* Does the publisher have a commercial or ideological motive?

**Objectivity:**

* Is the information factual research or based on opinion?
* Is it biased? Would the author benefit from convincing you she/he is right?

**Accuracy:**

* Is the information true?
* Is it based on good research?
* Do other works come to the same conclusions?

**Currency:**

* When was the information published?
* Is it current enough for your research?

Consider all of these criteria when deciding if a source will be useful to you. For example, information may appear accurate, but if you doubt the authority of the source you may want to look elsewhere for more credible information.

**When you want research assistance ask a librarian! ☺**