Sociology Research Guide

Find Books  Find Articles  Suggested Websites  Research Process Guide

I. Find Books

A) Reference Materials: Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.

Reference materials offer background information and broad overviews of subjects. This information is often helpful in narrowing your topic and in selecting a specific area to explore further. Reference materials such as almanacs and yearbooks also provide quick access to statistical data.

1) Suggested Titles:


Biographical Dictionary of Sociologists. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008. (VER REF HM478 .S74 2008) Brings together 190 men and women past and present, who have made or are making significant contributions in the field of sociology. Each entry includes a short biography highlighting a sociologist's personal background, a detailed analysis of the theories or approaches that person contributed to his or her individual field, and a selective list of the subject's books, articles, or other professional literature.

B) **Library Catalog**: Print and E-book Collections

The online catalog offers convenient access to titles housed at all VC library locations. At the catalog screen, select “Search the Catalog” to locate titles or subjects that match your terms such as “socialization”.

**E-books**: To search only for titles available electronically, from the “Search the Catalog” page, select “Online” as the desired location. Use the dropdown menu to choose your search method (author, subject terms, etc), then enter your search term (ex. homelessness).

*Helpful feature*: While viewing a book, select the ”Search” tab to bring up a search bar which will allow you to locate a word or phrase within the entire content of the book.

C) **Browse the Collection**

Physically browse the sociology titles shelved by call number in the following Library of Congress Classification ranges:

- **HM**: Sociology (General)
- **HS**: Societies: secret, benevolent, etc.
- **HN**: Social history and conditions
  - Social problems
  - Social reform
- **HT**: Communities
  - Classes
  - Races
- **HQ**: The family
  - Marriage
  - Women
- **HV**: Social pathology
  - Social and public welfare
  - Criminology

II. **Find Articles**

A) Article Databases

1. **Academic Search Complete**: This database offers full-text coverage of 4,500 journals on a wide variety of subjects. Titles include:

   - *Canadian Journal of Sociology*
   - *Qualitative Sociology*
   - *Sociological Forum*
   - *Annual Review of Sociology*
   - *American Journal of Sociology*
   - *Contemporary Sociology*
and over two hundred others. Select from a number of different limiters to customize your search, including cover stories, publication dates, page numbers, etc.

Enter your keyword(s) to search all journals simultaneously for articles addressing your topic. For example, if looking for information on how the effects of **divorce** on **children**, enter both terms connected with the Boolean operator “and”.

*Citing the articles*: The database offers formatting rules with examples for citing the articles selected. For assistance in citing the articles, select the “Help” link in the upper right corner of the screen, scroll to view “Citation Styles” in the left menu bar, and then choose the documentation style of your choice.

2. **Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center**: Provides a wealth of information on current issues and controversial topics. Information includes pro-con essays, journal articles, statistics, primary sources, and links to multimedia files. The database also provides assistance in citing the information selected.

**In-house Magazines and Journals**: **Futurist** and **Journal of Social Psychology** are available in the reference section of the Wright Library, located on the Vernon campus.

### III. Suggested Websites

**The Institute for American Values**: Within the focus on civil society, the institute’s three current priorities are marriage, thrift, and public conversation. Together, these three are primary determinants of the health of civil society.

**Encyclopedia of Death and Dying**: Free encyclopedia which provides hundreds of articles on topics related to death and dying. The website features a search bar which will allow you to quickly locate an article, or you can browse through the alphabetically divided pages.

**Forced Migration Online**: Forced Migration Online (FMO) is home to a growing collection of resources relating to refugees and forced migration. FMO is designed for use by students, academics, practitioners, policy makers, the media, forced migrants or anyone else interested in the field of forced migration.

**Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation**: The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) advises the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on policy development in health, disability, human services, data, and science, and provides advice and analysis on economic policy. ASPE leads special initiatives, coordinates the Department’s evaluation, research and demonstration activities, and manages cross-Department planning activities such as strategic planning, legislative planning, and review of regulations. Integral to this role, ASPE conducts
research and evaluation studies, develops policy analyses, and estimates the cost and benefits of policy alternatives under consideration by the Department or Congress.
The Research Process

1) Select a topic that you find interesting and appropriate for the assignment.

2) Review reference sources such as subject encyclopedias for background information to help focus or narrow the search.

   For example, students interested in the social class may consult the Encyclopedia of Sociology for ideas in narrowing the focus to its relationship to academic achievement.

3) Restate the topic as a question. Inquiry is at the heart of the research process, a quest to locate information which answers questions and leads researchers to a greater understanding of the topic.

   Restating the topic as a question will help in:
   - Locating information that is useful and relevant to the primary focus or thesis of your research.
   - Identifying the keywords or phrases to use in the search statement.

   Example: What is the relationship between social class and academic achievement?

4) Develop a search statement by combining keywords or concepts from the research question. For example, “social class” and “academic achievement” were identified as keywords in the question above. By connecting both terms with the Boolean operator “and”, the researcher will retrieve only those articles that discuss both concepts, thus improving the relevancy of the search.

   Enter in search field: social class and academic achievement

5) Develop alternate search statements to improve the search results. Authors may use various terms to describe the same concept.

   For example, social class is often used in the same context as social status.

   By identifying and connecting alternate terms, researchers may expand the search results. As indicated below, consider brainstorming and listing synonyms or word variations to identify alternate keywords.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>Concept 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>social class</td>
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<td>social status</td>
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<td>social rank</td>
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6) Evaluate information for objectivity and reliability.

7) Cite the information borrowed from other authors or informational sources. Careful documentation will ensure that credit is given with no intention to plagiarize or claim ownership of information belonging to other researchers. For explanations and examples, visit the Duke University Library’s Citation page.

Questions?

Email: librarian@vernoncollege.edu

Chat: “Ask the Librarian” link on the Library homepage.

Phone: 940-552-6291 ext: 2222