## University of Northern Colorado

# Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Information Literacy

Open Educational Resources @ UNC

2019

# **Developing a Research Topic Using the Library**

Darren llett *University of Northern Colorado*, darren.ilett@unco.edu

Stephanie Evers *University of Northern Colorado*, stephanie.evers@unco.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digscholarship.unco.edu/infolit

#### **Recommended Citation**

Ilett, Darren and Evers, Stephanie, "Developing a Research Topic Using the Library" (2019). *Information Literacy*. 21.

https://digscholarship.unco.edu/infolit/21

This Lesson Plan is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources @ UNC at Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Information Literacy by an authorized administrator of Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. For more information, please contact Jane.Monson@unco.edu.

### Lesson Plan: Developing a Research Topic Using the Library

#### **Introduction** (~2-3 min.)

- Tell students that this lesson will help them when they have to do a research paper in any class; they can use the library to develop a research topic.
- Objectives: determine keywords for searching, develop a research paper topic, and find sources using a library database/discovery tool.

### Part 1: Ripped from the Headlines (~7 min.)

- Explain that news stories are a way to get ideas for research papers when you're stuck.
- Explain that we're thinking of keywords to develop a research topic and search for sources.
- Distribute worksheet.
- Students suggest keywords related to topic of sample headline.
- Students complete part 1, brainstorming keywords for each topic, including their own topic for the class assignment.
- Note: headlines are just starting point; they don't necessarily have to stick closely to them.
- Debrief about specificity of keywords.

#### Part 2: Keywords (~7 min.)

- Explain to students that searching takes lots of tries with different combinations of keywords.
- Point out example of keywords & synonyms from sample news story.
- Note that they can be either words or phrases and either synonyms or related terms.
- Students complete part 2, listing 3 keywords and 3 synonyms or related terms.
- Have students share results with small groups or share a few examples with whole class.

### Part 3: Searching (~10 min.)

- Show students the library database. Describe what it is and what kinds of things it searches for.
- Do a search or two to show results list; talk about anatomy of search screen and of a record.
- Tell students they should start with 1 keyword, then try different combinations of 2-3 keywords, keeping track of the number of search results each time.
- Students complete part 3, trying different keyword combinations.
- Debrief about the effect of combining and changing keywords as well as any obstacles students encountered.

#### Part 4: Developing a Research Topic (~10 min.)

- Point out that searching can help identify new concepts & develop a research topic.
- Show search results on sample topic & talk about how it led to a research paper topic.
- Students complete part 4.

### Part 5: Saving Search Results (~5 min.)

- Tell students that we want to save the sources we've found.
- Demonstrate how to save sources.
- Students complete part 5, saving sources.

### Debrief (~5 min.)

- Ask students if they have any unanswered questions.
- Show students how to get additional help.
- Have students take 2-3 minutes at the end of the session to complete a brief assessment.

### **Assessment Questions** (~5 min.)

Students answer these questions:

- A search using the keywords "youth nicotine addiction" did not come up with good results. What are 2 or 3 synonyms or related terms that I could search with instead?
- Why does using more keywords bring up fewer search results?
- What research topic did you end up with?

# Library Session: Developing a Research Topic Using the Library

# **Part 1: Ripped from the Headlines**

News stories are a great way to come up with ideas for research papers.

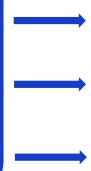
Brainstorm 3 important words or phrases from each of these news topics, including a news headline that interests you.

These words or phrases will help us develop a research topic and search for sources.



Criticism from Parents Affects How Children's Brains Respond to Emotional Information

New research shows that children with critical parents pay less attention to emotional facial expressions



FDA Cracks Down in 'Blitz' on e-Cigarette Sales to Kids

Popular devices such as Juul may be getting kids addicted to nicotine and causing health issues



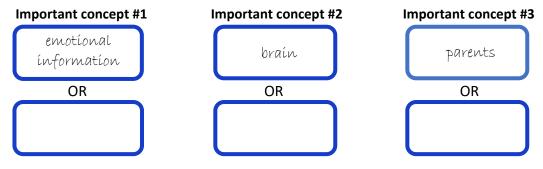
To help come up with your own topic, what is a headline you've seen recently that you'd like to learn more about?



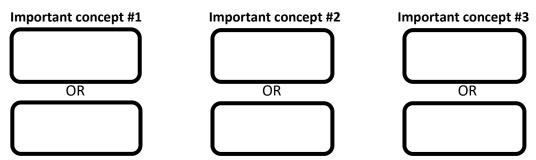
# Part 2: Keywords

Successful searching takes lots of tries with different keyword combinations. Let's think of some **synonyms** or **related terms** for our concepts from the news stories to help with searching later.

Here are possible **keywords** and **synonyms** or **related terms** based on our sample news story of critical parents, kids, and emotional facial expressions.



What keywords fit the news story you picked? Put the 3 most important keywords in the 1st row. Then think of a **synonym** or a **related term** for each keyword and put them in the 2nd row.



# Part 3: Searching

Now let's try out the keywords and synonyms you brainstormed in part #2 to search for sources. Start by searching with 1 keyword. Then add an additional keyword and then finally search on all 3 of your keywords. Keep track of the number of search results.

Search #1	Search #2	Search #3
Keyword:	Keywords:	Keywords:
Number of results:	Number of results:	Number of results:

## Part 4: Developing a Research Topic

Let's use what you found to keep thinking about a possible research paper topic. Searching on your initial idea can help you find new concepts and develop your topic based on what you find.

These are some new concepts I came across in sources I found when searching on my news story and reading titles and abstracts of articles:

discipline, emotional distress, social anxiety, depression

Based on what I found, I came up with the following topic for a possible research paper:

The effect of discipline on children's mental health

Go back to your search results and skim for new concepts that interest you. List some here:

Based on what you found, fill in below for a more focused research topic:	
I am working on the topic	
because I want to find out	
in order to fix/improve	

# **Part 5: Saving Search Results**

After you find relevant sources for your topic, you don't want to lose them. Make sure to save the articles or e-mail them to yourself.

[Note to instructor: you can place your own steps for saving sources here.]