

First-Year Students & College Libraries

How to utilize all they have to offer.....

10. **College libraries are BIG.** Due to the need of supporting numerous areas of study, University libraries have millions of books, often housed in large buildings. Your library at OhioLINK contains millions of books as well and after oriented to our big library, it will seem less intimidating.
9. **Research is a process.** Research involves looking in several places, taking careful notes, asking questions, and sometimes false starts. The information you find can be that small detail which makes your paper perfect to an exciting opportunity in the field that eventually leads to your career choice. The information found today could change lives tomorrow.
8. **Know your ABCs and 123s.** Knowing the basics will help to understand the Library of Congress (LC) classification system used to organize materials in most college libraries. LC numbers can seem confusing at first because they begin with letters instead of numbers, a big difference from the Dewey system used in school and public libraries.
7. **Ask questions.** As mentioned above, university libraries can be big places with millions of items and thousands of resources, many of these online. Do not be afraid to ask questions. No person is expected to navigate the complexity of the library on his or her own. Librarians are available in person, via phone or email, and on the web through live chat.
6. **Become familiar with citations.** A citation is a listing containing key pieces of information about a work, making it possible to locate it. The elements of a citation normally include author, title, and date of publication. Depending on the type of material (book, article, video, etc.) other elements will be present such as volume, issue, and page numbers of journal articles. Citations represent a basic element of scholarly research. You will use citations to locate information and also give credit to the works of others when you write about them. *RefWorks* is an excellent program to help manage citations and create a bibliography or works cited page.
5. **Evaluation is the Key.** Your ability to evaluate the information you use is more important than ever, especially since the rise of the World Wide Web, where anyone can post information. Turn a critical eye to the information you find and use. Ask questions like who wrote this? What are their credentials? How old is this information? Does the author display bias in anyway? You probably already know how to do these types of evaluations. What questions do you ask when you shop for music or for a car?

The Top Ten

- 1. Focus on scholarly literature.** Newsweek and Sports Illustrated are not considered scholarly journals. Scholarly journals report research, and your professors will expect you to focus your investigations on these types of sources. Some characteristics of scholarly journals include a list of works cited at the end of articles. Many of the most popular research databases provided by the library, like Academic Search Premier, allow you to limit your search to scholarly journals. The authors of journal articles are often professors or other professionals. Many journal articles lack the colorful graphics and advertising of popular magazines.
- 2. Everything is not on GOOGLE.** Many students have the misperception that they can find everything with search engines like GOOGLE. The truth is search engines like GOOGLE cannot always access the more reliable sources. Take the library's web site for example. The resources contain licensed information that has been reviewed by publishers, editors, and librarians. Only students and faculty of the university can access this information. Search engines will not help you find this authoritative information and do not have editors or librarians reviewing their information.
- 3. Get an early start.** With all the technology available today, you might think that getting an early start on your research is not that important, but it is. Some library services like Interlibrary Loan can take several days to retrieve the information you need. Perhaps more importantly, by starting early you can avoid the frustrations that can rise when you hit bumps in the road. For example, the book you need is checked out or your first few searches do not turn up as much information as you hoped.
- 4. Learn to avoid plagiarism.** Plagiarism is intellectual theft, and your professors take it very seriously. Simply stated, to plagiarize is to use another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without giving credit. Turning in another person's paper as your own is a blatant example of plagiarism. Accidentally failing to correctly cite a source because it is not clear from your sloppy notes is also plagiarism. Be careful and stay aware of the rules. Turnitin.com is a great program to help check for plagiarism. Talk with your professor or librarian to obtain more information on Turnitin.com

*These steps build on information in Suzanne Smith's article
"The top 10 Things High School Seniors Need to Know about College Libraries,"
which appeared in The Book Report, March/ April 2002, p. 42*



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