The purpose of this assignment is to…

- help you think through the initial steps in your research process;
- give you an opportunity to practice evaluating the credibility and relevance of information;
- introduce you to WorldCat Discovery, an important library resource for finding books, articles, and other materials not available through Google or free online search tools.

Librarians are available to assist with any aspect of this assignment or your research. If you need assistance, please ask for a librarian at the Ekstrom Research Office (1st Floor) or schedule an appointment with a librarian (library.louisville.edu/librarian-specialty).

PART 1: THINKING THROUGH YOUR TOPIC

Use the criteria provided by your professor to identify the topic for your speech. If you’re having trouble, consider talking with a librarian at the Ekstrom Research Office (1st Floor).

1. What is your topic? What do you find most interesting about your topic at this stage?

2. What specific questions do you have about your topic right now? What aspects of your topic do you plan to learn more about or explore in more depth? What kind of information do you hope to find?

3. Search Google for information about your topic. Try several searches with different keywords. Look over your search results and a few of the individual sources you found. What words/phrases about your topic stand out? What kinds of things are people writing about in relation to your topic?

PART 2: EXPLORING SOURCES THROUGH WORLDCAT DISCOVERY

Accessible from the UofL Libraries’ homepage (library.louisville.edu), WorldCat Discovery searches print books, e-books, articles, government documents, and multimedia sources available from libraries across the world. Use WorldCat Discovery to complete the next set of questions.
4. Keeping in mind your responses to the previous questions in Part 1, use WorldCat Discovery to search for relevant sources that will help you learn more about your topic. Spend some time looking through your results. Try a few different searches using synonyms or related words. For example, if you started by searching for “sex discrimination,” then you might also try searching for “gender discrimination.”

Write down the words you used for two of the searches you tried. Did one of the searches lead to more relevant results? How will you go about deciding which sources are most relevant and useful for your topic?

5. Sources listed in WorldCat Discovery that are available from UofL will say “Held by: University of Louisville Libraries.” WorldCat Discovery will also tell you if an item is a “Book,” an “Article,” or some other type of source.

Find a book that seems especially relevant to your topic. The book should be available from UofL Libraries and not currently checked out. A book that is not currently checked out will say “Available.” Ask a librarian if you need help with this process.

Write down the following information about the book and find it in the library (or, if it’s an e-book, click “Access Online” or ask for assistance finding it online from the library).

Title of the book:____________________________________________________________

Author/Editor:______________________________ Publisher:__________________________

Place of publication:________________________ Year Published:______________________

Location (name of UofL library):________________ Call number:_____________________

6. What made you select this particular book? Why does it seem especially relevant? What topics are covered in the individual chapters in the book?

7. How would you evaluate the credibility of the book? You might consider the author’s qualifications, the type of evidence or research presented in the book, the sources cited in the book, the level of depth, or other issues. At this stage, do you see the book as credible for your purposes? Why or why not? See louisville.libguides.com/evaluation for more information about evaluating sources.
8. Now use WorldCat Discovery to find a relevant article for your topic. You can narrow your results to articles using the menu on the left side of the screen. After clicking on an article held by University of Louisville Libraries, you can use the “Access Online” button or “View Full Text” button to get the article.

Write down the citation information for the article:

Title of the article:____________________________________________________

Author:______________________________________________________________

Name of journal/magazine (publication):____________________________________

Volume and issue numbers:_________ Date:_____________ Page numbers:_______

9. What type of information or evidence does the article provide? What questions does the article address in relation to your topic? How does this article compare to other articles you found on WorldCat Discovery, Google, or another search tool? Does it seem scholarly? Why or why not?

10. Is the article credible and appropriate for your purposes? Why or why not? Be as specific as possible in your evaluation. See louisville.libguides.com/evaluation for more information.

PART 3: REFLECTING ON YOUR RESEARCH

11. Take a moment to look over your previous responses and to reflect on your research at this early stage. How has your research thus far (including the sources you collected for this assignment) influenced your understanding of the topic? What are the most significant issues or questions you need to address as you continue your research? What are your next steps? What other search tools could you use to find additional information? See our Research Guides at library.louisville.edu.