

# THE SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROCESS

## KEYS TO YOUR SUCCESS

- Research is always a multistep process.
- Research is iterative (repetitive, building on the results of previous searches to obtain the best and most useful information)
- Research is often interdisciplinary.
- Think broadly about your topic; then narrow and refine the focus (i.e., work from the general to the specific.
- Keep a record of everything you find and where and how you find it.

## STEPS TO YOUR SUCCESS

### Identify Your Topic

- The topic is the idea that you are researching.
- Brainstorm ideas/concepts related to this topic.
- Think about and visualize your topic from many different angles.
- Note related and interrelated topics.
- Note terminology and synonyms that can broaden your searching power.
- State your topic as a question or a statement.
- Refine the question.
- Identify key concepts and list synonyms for them.
- List disciplines or subject areas that relate to part of your research.

### Gather Background Information

- Get a broad overview of the subject or topic.
- Use both general and subject-specific encyclopedias and dictionaries.
- Get more focused, in-depth, or historical background on the topic.
- Use books written in the time period and follow up with more recent information.

### Focus Your Research

- Gather in-depth, focused information best suited to your topic (e.g., current, historical, primary sources).
- Use indexes and article databases to locate articles in periodicals (e.g., scholarly, substantive, popular, trade) appropriate for your topic.
- Use high-quality, appropriate web sites.

### Evaluate Your Sources

- Does the author have authority on the topic?
- What are the author's credentials?
- Is the information accurate for when it was written?
- Is there a consensus of opinion on the topic?
- What are the important ideas?
- What is the purpose of the source? How will it impact your research?