



Choosing a Research Topic

FINDING IDEAS - PRINT RESOURCES

Opposing Viewpoints; Current Controversies; At Issue; Taking Sides; and Reference Shelf

Opposing Viewpoints, Current Controversies, At Issue, Taking Sides, and Reference Shelf are series of circulating books on topics of current interest. You can browse the titles in a particular series by doing a keyword search in the library catalog on the series name (e.g. opposing viewpoints). You can search for a specific topic in a series by doing a keyword search and typing the topic followed by the series name (e.g. gun control and opposing viewpoints).

Various call numbers

Current Magazines and newspapers

Browse current issues of newspapers and news magazines, like *Time* or *Newsweek*, or subject specific magazines in your field of interest, like *Science* or *Health*.

Periodical Display Area

FINDING IDEAS - ONLINE RESOURCES

The library subscribes to several online collections (databases) of articles. These databases can be accessed from the library's Web page *Magazines, Journals, and Databases Online* at http://www.missioncollege.org/lib/database_top.html. (Note: In order to access databases from off campus, you must have a current student or staff I.D. entered into the library's computer system.) The databases classified as "Pro/Con" offer comprehensive reporting and analysis on issues in the news. They are useful for finding a topic or for researching a specific topic.

CQ Researcher

This database is updated weekly and provides in-depth reports on controversial topics. It allows you to browse controversial topics or to specify a specific topic using the search box. Use the *Browsed by Date* and *Browse by Topic* links in the left margin to look for current topics.

Facts on File Issues and Controversies

This database is updated weekly and provides in-depth reports on controversial topics. It allows you to browse controversial topics or to specify a specific topic using the search box. Use the *Need a Research Topic* link (lower right) to look for current topics. The Pro/Con section (lower left) is useful for argumentative speeches.

Opposing Viewpoints in Context

This database is updated daily and pulls together a broad variety of data and resources on controversial topics. It allows you to browse controversial topics or to specify a specific topic using the search box. Use the *Issues* link (across the top of the screen) to look for current topics.

FINDING IDEAS - YOUR OWN INTERESTS

You can often choose a topic that is thoroughly interesting to you, particularly if your instructor does not assign specific topics or a range of topics. Selecting a topic that is interesting to you has several benefits, including:

- You may already know information about the topic.
- You may already be aware of resources on the topic.
- You will find it more fun to research and write about the topic.
- You will probably be able to write a better report about the subject.

FINDING IDEAS - THE REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Please feel free to ask the librarian at the Information Desk for assistance in finding and using topic selection tools.

SELECTING A TOPIC - DO NOT MAKE YOUR TOPIC TOO BROAD

A topic that is too broad will be very frustrating to research and organize, especially if the finished report or speech is to be fairly short. One good way to narrow a topic is to phrase it as a question. Thus, the topic "gun control" can be restructured, "Would tougher gun control laws provide more safety in our schools?" This narrows the focus of the topic to only those aspects of gun control that relate to safety in schools.