Research Based Academic Argument – Library Resources

Researching topics for argumentative papers requires accessing a variety of resources. These resources can be divided into three categories based upon where you are in the research process.

**Looking for topic ideas:**

Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center
- identify possible topic areas
- different views about these topics
- mix of non-scholarly and scholarly sources
- most useful at the beginning of research & topic generation

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[Image: Screenshot of Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center]

Clicking on any one of these topics will open up a new page in your web browser.
SIRS Researcher Database: This database identifies topics that are controversial and have distinct sides. While the database was designed for junior high-high school students, it is also a nice starting point for generating ideas and identifying issues related to the topic.

Developing basic knowledge about your subject:

Getting basic background knowledge on a topic or issue involving argument requires sources that can identify different aspects of the issue and sources that can provide background information about your issue. Newspapers and book based sources such as library reference books, encyclopedias, and census data can be powerful sources for background information even though these are not scholarly sources.

Lexis-Nexis Academic
- Source for newspaper and media information
- Major newspapers i.e., Washington Post and NY Times
- Source for business information on specific companies
- Has an “Easy Search” and “Power Search” function
- Use the “Power Search” over the “Easy Search”
- Excellent for issue identification (pros and cons)
- Excellent for identifying what the public is concerned about

The yellow tab labeled Viewpoints will give you access to short articles that take positions on one side of an issue. You can usually find different viewpoints in direct opposition to one another here.

Clicking on one of the subject terms links on the left side of the screen will retrieve all articles that are on the topic or subject.
Library catalog
- Search specific collections i.e. reference docs or gov docs
- Search general collection
- Reference materials provide good resources for basic knowledge on a topic.

Online sources for statistics

Each of the sources below is accessed from the Research Gateway page. They are listed in alphabetical order. Clicking on the letter of the alphabet under the Research Databases Alphabetical Listing toolbar will move you to that section of the databases.

County and City Data Books
Statistical Abstracts of the United States
Stats-USA

US Government web portal: www.usa.gov

The US Government produces statistics on a wide range of topics. This web portal will let you access relevant government agency websites for statistics and other information relevant to your topic.
Obtaining evidence to support your points of argument

You will want to begin gathering specific evidence from both library resources such as books and government documents and from scholarly databases beginning with general purpose databases then moving into searching subject specific databases containing scholarly articles.

General Purpose Databases: Each of the databases listed below are useful for broad searches across multiple categories. These databases are also useful for identifying connections across different disciplines. Academic Search Premier will be illustrated below.

- Academic Search Premier (Ebsco Host)
- Infotrack
- Proquest

Academic Search Premier

- General purpose database
- Many scholarly (peer reviewed) articles
- Searchable by key word and/or subject terms
- Easy to use interface

You can do a phrase search by enclosing the phrase (2 or more words) in quotation marks. This tells the database to search for the exact phrase.

Make sure you select the appropriate choice from the drop down menu. Selecting TX All Text tells the computer to search for your keyword or phrase in all of the text of each article.

You could limit your search results to only scholarly articles by clicking this box. However, since you are at the beginning of your search you might want to look at all results first. You will see another simple way to sort out the scholarly articles on the next page.
Clicking on Academic Journals will change your search results, showing only items from scholarly or peer reviewed journals as shown in the screen below.
Discipline Specific Databases

The choices below are some of the many discipline specific databases we have that contain scholarly articles. A brief description of each database is offered below. All of the Ebsco Host databases share the same search interface as Academic Search Premier.

- Arts & Humanities Search (AHSearch)
  This database covers articles and research in the arts and humanities as well as articles in the social sciences.

- Business Source Premier (Ebsco Host)
  Use this database to cover the business and management literature including both academic journals and trade publications.

- Communication & Mass Media Complete (Ebsco Host)
  This database covers the topics of communication studies and mass media such as advertising and marketing. This is the database to go to when your topic covers a specific communication issue.

- ERIC (Ebsco Host)
  ERIC is the Educational Resource Information Center—a government sponsored database covering the field of education. If the article has an “ED” or Eric Document number then it will be available in microfiche on the second floor of the library.

- Healthsource Nursing/Academic (Ebsco Host)
  This database is useful for general medical information on a wide range of topics.

- JSTOR
  JSTOR or Journal Storage is a full text database of 1000’s of journal titles ranging from the 1800’s to about 2-3 years ago. This is a very useful database for anything involving history on a topic.

- Psych Info (Ebsco Host)
  Use psych info for anything that involves the field of psychology.

- PubMed
  PubMed is a government hosted resource for medical information. This database can be very heavy on the technical/medical terminology which can make it challenging to use.