Topic Exploration Using Background Information

Locating background information on a topic builds a base of knowledge, will help formulate additional questions to investigate, and will lead to additional information resources. Finding background information helps you develop more complex research questions and will result in better research!

What is a Reference Source?

Reference sources traditionally include dictionaries, encyclopedias and handbooks that give factual information (like definitions, dates, and statistics). Some entries are short, some longer, and may give context about a topic and help you narrow a topic.

Assignment

- Watch Video: Picking a Topic IS Research!  https://youtu.be/Q0B3Gjlu-1o

- Write your tentative research question below. For example: How do marriage customs develop within a culture and how do they express opinions of gender held by that culture?

- Brainstorm 2-3 areas of knowledge that you should research in order to better understand your topic and answer your research question. For example, to help answer my question, I’ll search for the words MARRIAGE CUSTOM, GENDER and MARRIAGE, maybe even the HISTORY of MARRIAGE.

- Locate the BACKGROUND tab on the Global Perspectives research guide:  https://library.monmouthcollege.edu/GP
• Conduct searches in at least TWO of these online reference resources.
  - CREDO Reference – over 800 multidisciplinary reference sources
  - OXFORD Reference Online – focused on humanities and social sciences
  - SAGE e-Reference – focused on humanities and social sciences

• While you search the online reference resources:
  1. Write down the **keywords** you used and how you combined them.

  2. Write down **NEW words and concepts** you want to investigate (and feel free to investigate them!)

  3. Reference entries that are a bit lengthier usually have a BIBLIOGRAPHY at the end citing their sources.
     • **Find at least ONE citation in a bibliography of the reference entry you read.**
       Choose one that may be helpful for you to investigate and **CITE it below**. You may use MLA, APA or Chicago citation style. Example:

• **Is the item you cited above a book, an article or a primary resource?** How do you know?

• Reflect on this process in 150 words or less: What did you learn about your topic? What is the next step in your research?

Bring copy of this completed worksheet to class.