

## HINTS FOR FINDING SOURCES

1. Make an appointment with a **research librarian**. From the Vanderbilt library homepage, click on the heading “Get Help With Research.” Then, under the heading “Research Assistance and Guides,” click on the tab “Subject Librarians.” Voila! You have the location, email, and telephone contact information for librarians by subject area.
2. For **reference guides** like the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, etc., click on “Articles and Databases” from the library main page, and then go to “Dictionaries/Encyclopedias” under the heading “Looking for Something Else?”
3. For **newspaper articles**, click on “Articles and Databases” from the library main page, and then go to LexisNexis. You will want to select a source, and you may also want your search to cover multiple years. Be sure to navigate the appropriate drop boxes.
4. For **journal articles**, click on “Articles and Databases” from the library main page, and then select a subject area from the drop-down list (starts with “African-American Studies”).
5. For **books** in the Vanderbilt library, search the ACORN catalog, located in several places on the library main page. Select a search type from the drop-down box to get better results; you may want to try “Subject Keyword” if you’re doing a more general search, or “Title” if you know exactly what you want. (Don’t forget to drop “the,” “an,” and other first-word articles when searching a title – for example, searching for “The Van” does not find Roddy Doyle’s novel *The Van*, but searching for “Van” does.) We also recommend doing an Advanced ACORN search.
6. In fields where new data and ideas are constantly emerging, be careful to **check the publication dates** of your sources. Especially in the sciences and social sciences, research from fifty years ago will be out of date and will inaccurately represent the present state of the field.
7. As a general rule when doing any kind of research, know that **the Internet** is full of questionable and sometimes thoroughly unreliable sources. This is not to say that information from *electronic* sources is not ever valid; plenty of well-respected journals and other resources are available electronically through the library’s Web site. Just remember: Googling to find leads is one thing; Googling to find material to *cite* is typically frowned upon.
8. You may want to read around in general encyclopedias to get ideas and acquire a basic familiarity with your topic, but do not depend upon them too much in your final paper. Strong research papers **engage with more specialized sources**.
9. The library offers so many resources to aid you with gathering information for your research paper. **Check out the library’s suggestions** on the web at <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/heard/researchhelp.shtml> or speak to a reference librarian in person.