



Western Libraries Undergraduate Research Awards

Research Worksheet

Research is fun, frustrating, and fascinating all at once. As we are in the thick of it, we rarely jot down how we go about doing it. The following research worksheet is designed to help you reflect on your own research process and to prepare you to answer the research questions on the online application form for the Western Libraries Undergraduate Research Awards.

For each category, read the questions and jot down your answers in the notes box. Your responses can be in paragraph or point form. Since all research projects are different, you will find that some questions may not apply to you. Feel free to add other categories that reflect your style of research, which is iterative, messy, and not always linear.

1. Research Topic

How did you choose your topic? Was it given to you by your instructor, or did you have to choose one on your own? What interests you about this topic? What compels you to want to learn more about it? Why is your topic important to research?

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2. Research Question

What is your research question? A research question grows out of your topic and leads to a problem worth solving. It is often an interrogative statement that clearly outlines what (topic), who (individuals or communities), where (geography), and when (chronology) you are studying.

Notes:



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3. Background Research

What type of background research did you perform to learn more about your topic? Did you go to the library or archives? Did you explore the internet? Did you use an AI chatbot? Or did you speak with your instructor or other members of your community? Here are a few examples:

- Consulting reference materials like dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks.
- Scanning through the abstracts of scholarly journal articles.
- Reading book reviews on a given subject.
- Leafing through newspaper and magazine articles.
- Surfing the internet for trustworthy websites, blogs, podcasts, and videos.
- Talking to your professors during office hours.
- Speaking with people who have firsthand knowledge of your topic.
- Using AI tools to obtain background information.
- Listening to the wisdom of elders in your communities.

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4. Search Terms

What are the key concepts in your research question? Concepts are the people, terms, and ideas in your research question.

Notes:



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5. Keywords

What are the keywords that are related to the concepts from your research question? Keywords are synonyms of and related terms to your key concepts.

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6. Search Strings

How did you connect your keywords together in library catalogues, databases, and search engines? How did your searches turn out? What needs to be modified?

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7. Discovery Tools

What tools did you use to find information for your research topic? The list below provides you with the major tools available to you through Western Libraries. Record the tools you used and why they were useful. List the databases you used and why. Jot down other tools you used from other libraries, archives, and institutional repositories. You should also note when you used AI search engines or AI academic search engines.

- [Library Catalogue](#). A one-stop access point to all Western Libraries collections.
- [Library Databases](#). Links to hundreds of databases in several disciplines.
- [Research Guides](#). Guides with links to a variety of physical and digital resources.
- [Western University Open Repository](#). Institutional repository for the Western community.
- [Western Access to Memory](#). Descriptions of fonds, collections, items; over 8,000 digital images.
- [Archives Finding Aids](#). Descriptions of individual fonds and collections in Western's Archives.



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8. Library Services

What library and archives services did you use for your research project? These services might involve help from library staff; the use of library and archives study spaces and technology; or access to physical and digital collections.

- **Research Help.** Western Libraries staff provides reference help, chat service, research consultations, videos and how-tos, and in-class instruction.
- **Library/Archives Spaces and Equipment.** Western Libraries offers study spaces, equipment for loan, and other tools for reading, viewing, and reproducing library and archives materials.
- **Collections.** Western Libraries extends borrowing privileges to print and non-print materials and physical and digital access to a wide range of resources.

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9. Sources

What library and archives resources did you use for your research? Were they physical materials or digital? How did you acquire access to these sources? Were they open access or were they subscription based? The following list is by no means exhaustive.

- **Print sources:** books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, microfilm.
- **Non-print sources:** films, audiotapes, videotapes, CDs, DVDs.
- **Digital sources:** eBooks, eJournals, eMagazines, eNewspapers, images, videos.



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- **Archival sources:** letters, diaries, photographs, business papers, personal records.
- **Cartographic sources:** maps, atlases, globes, air photos.
- **Data sources:** datasets, tables, spreadsheets, geospatial databases.

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