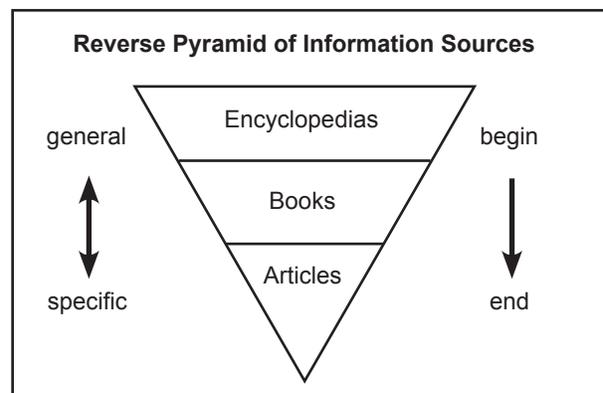


~~7~~⁸ Steps to Research Success

1. **Start at the source.** The UNB Libraries' website is the best starting place: lib.unb.ca. You will find thousands of electronic publications, plus you will be directed to the 1.4 million books in the libraries' collections—even Google cannot give you that.
2. **Know your topic.** Make sure your research topic is not too broad, too specific, or lacking context. Write your topic as a specific question to focus your research, and get context from an encyclopedia.

3. **Descend the pyramid.** With so much information available to you, where should you start? Try the “reverse pyramid” method: start with the most general information and then move on to publications that tend to be more specific.

At the beginning of your research, a reference tool such as an encyclopedia can provide a general overview of your topic and put it into a broader context. **Go beyond Wikipedia**—the library has hundreds of more reliable academic reference books, both online and in print.



After getting an overview, move on to more in-depth books, and finally go to the most specific (and perhaps more technical) journal articles last.

4. **Choose the right tools.** The publications listed above can be found by using various “discovery tools”—databases on the libraries' website which let you discover different types of publications. Try a subject guide for your research area, which will direct you to librarian-recommended tools and other information sources. From lib.unb.ca, click on: [Subject and Course Guides](#)

5. **Evaluate your results.** Your search will probably result in a lot of information—perhaps lists of hundreds of publications. How can you choose the best? Here are some basic things to consider.

- **Author's qualifications** (Is s/he affiliated with a university or research organization?)
- **Publisher** (Is it a university press, for example?)
- **Publication date** (Do you require the latest information, or a classic or standard text?)
- **Length** (Is the publication too brief? Too detailed?)
- Are there **references**? (Reliable research publications usually list their sources.)
- Any **subject** or **content** details? (Abstracts, subject headings, descriptors, tables of contents?)
- **Peer review** (Unlike magazines, academic journals use this rigorous publication process.)

Also consider how the publications compare with the general body of academic literature in the subject area. It is usually best to **research broadly** to ensure you find a range of perspectives which generally represent academic thinking on your topic.

6. Read it! Take the time to carefully read the key information sources you find, not just skim or scan them. You may need to “unplug” and find a quiet corner of the library. Think carefully about the arguments and issues presented by the author. Keep in mind that any subject expert who reads your research assignment (such as your professor) will likely be able to tell whether or not you have fully and critically comprehended the sources you reference.

7. Write right. Every student should have a good writing and research handbook. Check out the list of recommended titles at lib.unb.ca/research/PlagiarismBibliography.html. Your professor may also provide writing advice, and further help is available at UNB’s Writing and Study Skills Centre (which provides writing help at the Harriet Irving Library) or the STU Writing Centre.

When preparing your bibliography, include a variety of publication types, and follow the standard citation style specified by your professor, such as **APA**, **MLA**, **Chicago**, or **CSE**. Brief citation style example sheets are available at the above website, where you will also find information on RefWorks, ProQuest databases’ Cite option, and EBSCOhost databases’ Citation Format option, which can save you time by automatically formatting references.

8. Take time to seek out the research experts. Do not assume that you will be able to find everything you need for a research paper in an hour or two. All aspects of the learning process require time. Finding relevant and reliable information, critically reading and evaluating it, and writing clearly about it—all are **time-intensive** activities. But as a general rule, expect the research process to take about three times as long as the writing process.

You will likely need some help along the way. When you do, remember that the library is in the business of providing research help:

Harriet Irving Library Research Help Desk

Physical Location: Learning Commons, Main Floor, HIL

Phone: 506-453-3546

Email: askus@unb.ca

Instant Message: lib.unb.ca/help/ask.php  **Ask Us**

Subject Liaison Librarians

lib.unb.ca >> [Subject and Course Guides](#) >>  **Ask a Librarian**

In addition to helping provide general service at the Research Help Desk, these librarians provide advanced or specific research help in their subject areas. For contact information, see one of the subject guides, or ask at the Desk.

This information sheet is based upon UNB Libraries’ ***A Guide to Research Success***, available at the Harriet Irving Library. A printer-friendly PDF version of the whole booklet is also available at lib.unb.ca/research/success.pdf. In addition, a web version is available at lib.unb.ca/research/success.html