Historical Research for MMAS Students

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The Research Process

**Step 1: Clearly Define Your Topic or "Information Need"

- Start with a broad area of interest. Example: Star Trek.
- Narrow down your topic. Example: *Star Trek: TNG*
- Focus on something specific. Example: The use of expendable crew members in *Star Trek: TNG*.
- Write a “working” Thesis. Example: Expendable crewmembers in *Star Trek: TNG* have higher life expectancies than expendable crew members from the original *Star Trek* series.
- Note that this does not have to be your final thesis, just an idea to get the research process going. You can change and modify your thesis along the way.

Other Things to Consider:

- How much do you know about the topic?
- Is the topic manageable? Too much information - narrow your topic. Not enough information - expand your topic.
- Time needed - If your topic is too time-consuming: choose another topic or narrow your current topic.
- Availability of Information - are all the sources easily accessible (all on-hand), interlibrary loan time limits, etc.

**Step 2 Collect / Find Information

- How much information will you need? That will depend on the reason you need the information. If you are writing a paper, what size does your paper need to be?
- What kind of information do you need?
- What level of information do you need? Scholarly information, popular information, both?
How current does the information need to be?
Learn the terminology and the keywords associated with your topic.
Plan your search strategy. Learn the subject
Identify Information Sources -what type of sources will you use for your topic?

Reference Tools: there are a wide variety of reference tools found in both print and online formats. Often, you'll find some ideally suited for your topic. Reference materials point you to other sources of information.

Books: try searching the CARL catalog.

Periodical Literature: Journals, newspapers, and magazines are all valuable sources of information. Print indexes and electronic databases are used to find citations for scholarly articles and other types of periodical articles. Try using the CARL's Databases Page.

Government and Military Information & Documents: these can be found in a wide variety of formats, including print and electronic. Our Military Publications Page is a great place to begin searching for DOD, Joint, Army, and other military publications. DTIC Public Stinet Database also contains a wealth of military documents, including SAMS Monographs, MMAS Theses, and student papers from schools like the Naval Postgraduate School, Air University, and the Army War College.

The Internet: You can find some great information on the Internet, but you must always carefully evaluate the web pages you find. Educational sites (.edu), US Government sites (.gov), and US Military sites (.mil) are often reliable sources for information.

Step 3: Evaluate Your Information
The following are the 5 evaluation criteria used in evaluating sources.

1. Authority: who is responsible for the work, and what are their credentials
2. Reliability: does the information seem accurate?
3. Currency: is the information up-to-date?
4. Completeness: is the information complete or is it just a summary of another work? Information Level? Intended Audience?
5. Relevancy: does the information source answer your questions?

Step 4: Use and/or Do Something With the Information
Write the paper, give the presentation. Organize your Information - using an outline is always a good idea.
Step 5: Use the Information Ethically and Legally -- Cite Your Sources

Citation: reference to an exact Information Source. Where the author got his/her info.

Use citations to:

- Back up your research with facts.
- Allow others to follow your research.
- Give credit to the original author(s).
- Avoid Plagiarism.

Plagiarism is: the unacknowledged inclusion, in work submitted for credit, of someone else’s words, ideas, or data. The failure to identify any source, published or unpublished, copyrighted or uncopyrighted from which information, terms, phrases, or concepts have been taken, constitutes plagiarism.

Citations contain the following minimum information:

- Title of the information source / work.
- Author.
- Publishing Information.
- Web Address (if applicable).

Sample book citation for a bibliography in Turabian format:

Sample journal article citation for a bibliography in Turabian format:

Style Guides

Style Guides - show you how to properly cite your Information Sources. There are 4 main style guides, CGSC uses Turabian.


MLA (Modern Language Association). MLA handbook for writers of research papers. Call Number: 808.6 G437m 1995 (1st floor reserves) This is not the most current edition.
Call Number: **808.027 C532 2003**

Turabian. A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations.  
Call Number: **808.02 T929m 1996** (1st floor multiple copy section)

Style Guides Available Online: 

http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html

http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/cite/works_cited.htm

CARL’s listing of Style Guides:  

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Databases

JSTOR

JSTOR is on the CARL’s **Databases Page**. It is available at CAC and CGSC. From home you can access it by using your pin (the 14 digit number on the back of your CARL Library Card).

JSTOR is an archive of important scholarly journals. JSTOR offers researchers the ability to retrieve articles in PDF format. **JSTOR is not a current issues database.** There is a gap, typically from 1 to 5 years, between the most recently published journal issue and the content available in JSTOR. If you need more current articles from a journal in JSTOR, try searching for the journal in our online catalog to find its print holdings or in our **E-Journal Portal** to see if any other databases carry the journal.

From JSTOR's main page, click on "Advanced Search".

Notice the "JSTOR Advanced Search" area, shown below. It allows you to limit your search to specific fields and types of content. One way to narrow your search is to just limit it to the title field or to the abstract. If you're just looking for articles, you can check that box. It also allows you to limit your search to a particular date range or even a specific journal title.
America History and Life -- Historical Abstracts

America History and Life and Historical Abstracts are on our Databases Page. They are available at CAC and CGSC. From home you can access them by using your pin (the 12 digit number on the back of your CARL Library Card). They do not contain full text articles, but some provide links to articles located in JSTOR.

America History and Life Indexes and abstracts approximately 2100 scholarly journals covering the history and culture of the United States and Canada. Historical Abstracts is similar, but focuses primarily on the history of the rest of the world. Both use the same search system. Both Databases are available through EBSCOHost. To learn how to search them, see Academic Search Complete (below).
Academic Search Complete is available on our Databases Page through Articles--EBSCOHost. It is available at CAC and CGSC. From home you can access it by using your pin (the 14 digit number on the back of your CARL Library Card). The search screen, pictured below, allows you to search by type of document, dates, etc. It also allows you to limit your search to full-text articles and Scholarly/Peer reviewed articles.

Opening Records
Once you perform a successful search, you'll receive a list of records.

To view the citation and abstract for the record, click on the title of the article. To view the full text for the article, click on "PDF Full Text".
Some articles will be in PDF format, others will be in html. Some articles will only have abstracts available.

**Search Tips**
If you find an article that is highly relevant for your search, check its citation and abstract. Descriptors, keywords, authors, and other terms are hyperlinked in the record. The links show you all the records for those terms. For example, if you find warfare as a descriptor, by clicking on the hyperlink for warfare, you'll find every record in Academic Search Complete that uses warfare as a descriptor.

**DTIC ONLINE ADVANCED SEARCH**

DTIC's Advanced Search is available at the following URL: [http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/advanced_search.html](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/advanced_search.html)

It is a public database, accessible from any computer with an internet connection. You can also find a link to it on CARL's [Databases Page](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/advanced_search.html).

**USING DTIC's Advanced Search**

DTIC's Advanced Search is fairly easy to use, though the display format for the search results is of poor quality and organization.

**Search Tips**
When searching, use the word "AND" to limit your results. Use the word "OR" to expand your results.

**Truncation**
Use the * to truncate words. The * will find any combination of letters after the root of the word.

**NEED A DOCUMENT THAT IS NOT ONLINE?**

If you require a document from DTIC that is not available in full text, ask our reference desk for assistance. If you require a book or journal article that is not online, try searching for the journal in our [online catalog](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/advanced_search.html) to find its print holdings or in our [E-Journal Portal](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/advanced_search.html) to see if any other databases carry the journal. You can also stop by the 1st floor reference desk and request the item through interlibrary loan.