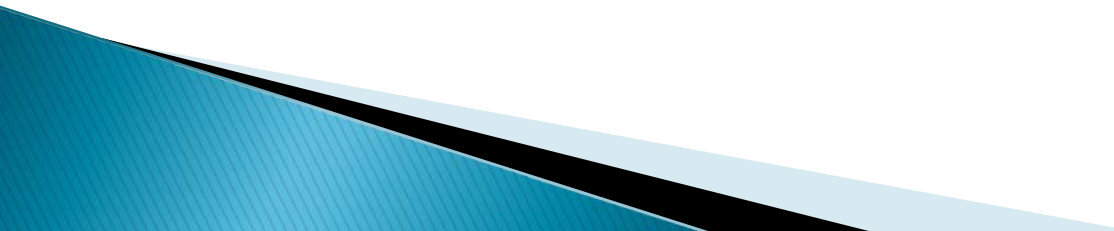


# Exploring and Conducting Academic Research

Shelley Blundell, Communication and Information



# Welcome lifelong learners!

- ▶ Today's session will discuss
    - Academic research at the graduate level,
    - How to begin a research endeavor,
    - Formulating a research idea,
    - Efficient and effective academic reading, and
    - Where to turn for assistance/advice/resources.
- 



# Why is academic research important?

- ▶ Expected within (and to be a part of) ‘the academy.’
- ▶ Academic research strengthens your argument.
- ▶ Academic research = assessment of what has been done.
- ▶ **Professors, advisors, and librarians – all great resources.**



# What about Google?

- ▶ Google – improved dramatically.
- ▶ Boolean operators, etc. (handout) return better results.
- ▶ Google Scholar – a great resource but ... why pay when you can get the work for free?
- ▶ What is the Kent State VPN, and how can it help me?



# Ask your advisor

- ▶ Advisors are typically assigned based on your research interests, therefore can aid you in developing your research ideas/projects during your program of study.
- ▶ Many advisors are considered authorities in their fields.
- ▶ Seek out advisors during office hours, or schedule appointments or 'virtual sessions' regularly.
- ▶ Other professors in your discipline are great resources, too.



# Ask a librarian

- ▶ Meet with a subject librarian in your field regularly.
- ▶ Establishing a regular meeting schedule/association with your subject librarian may open many research doors.
- ▶ Consider the Kent State University Libraries tutorials for additional assistance with your research action plan.



# Where to start? [1]

- ▶ Identify your information need/topic (assigned vs. selected).
- ▶ Refine the topic on which you want to find research.
- ▶ Put together an action plan for your research.
- ▶ If you're unclear, consult professors/advisor/librarians.

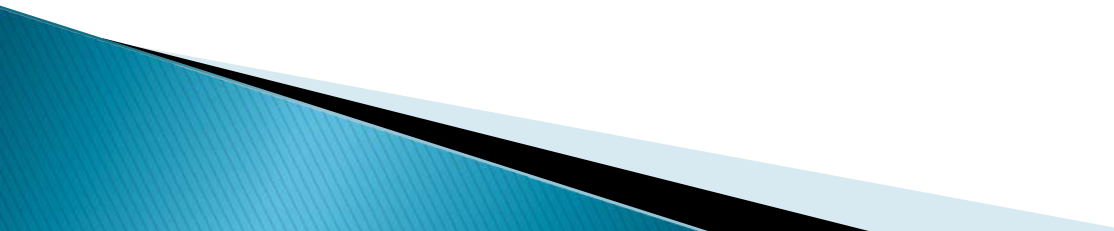


# Where to start? [2]

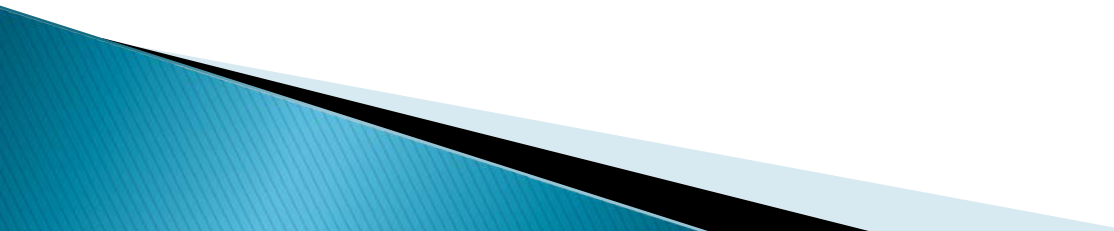
- ▶ Research action plan (also known as a research strategy):
  - Identify key words and phrases regarding your topic.
  - Perform preliminary searches using these words and phrases in research databases in your field.
  - Assess content returned – does it match your needs? Why/why not?
  - If necessary, refine words and phrases as you continue to do research.
  - Check references of good results for more resources.
  - If you get stuck, librarians can help you refine your strategy.



# Reliable/authoritative sources [1]

- ▶ What is a reliable and/or an authoritative source?
    - Written/created by professionals in the field.
    - Has date published/created detail.
    - From professional journals/books/sites.
    - Reviewed highly by others (in the field or outside).
- 

# Reliable/authoritative sources [2]

- ▶ Other ways to judge reliability/authority:
    - Journals/books/materials in your field that have transparent practices and high publication standards.
    - Journals/books/materials in your field recommended by professors/advisors/librarians.
  - ▶ It is good to refer to current materials in the field, but don't forget the role of pioneer works in your research.
  - ▶ If one or two journals in your field regularly provide useful and worthwhile information, consult these regularly.
- 



# Effective academic reading

- ▶ Time used efficiently is time saved.
- ▶ Academic resources – ‘exhaustive’ can be overwhelming, but decide on your resources wisely.
- ▶ Tips for decision-making:
  - Find ways to limit your search results efficiently (handout).
  - Become a self-filterer – which results are MOST related to your topic?
  - Assess authority/credibility/reliability/currency of materials.
  - Ask “who cites who?”



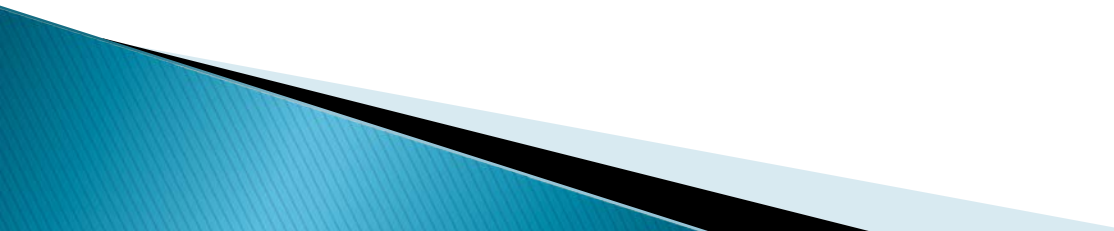
# Abstract, introduction, conclusion

- ▶ Three most useful and valuable parts of a journal article.
  - *Abstract*: General overview of the article.
  - *Introduction*: Why should I care?
  - *Conclusion*: Key findings and results.
- ▶ Three elements should display ‘usefulness’ of article.

# Additional effective reading tips

- ▶ While reading:
  - Take notes.
  - Highlight major points.
  - React to what you read.
  - Construct your own example.
  - Summarize what you have read in three to five sentences.
- ▶ Pro tip: Copy key quotes (WITH CITATION) into a separate document – will help you formulate and synthesize argument

# Books, other academic works

- ▶ Books – check out book reviews (many are accessible through scholarly databases and are more reliable than Amazon, etc.).
  - ▶ Online resources – check references, use Google Scholar to see how many times the work has been cited and how.
  - ▶ When in doubt, ask a librarian!
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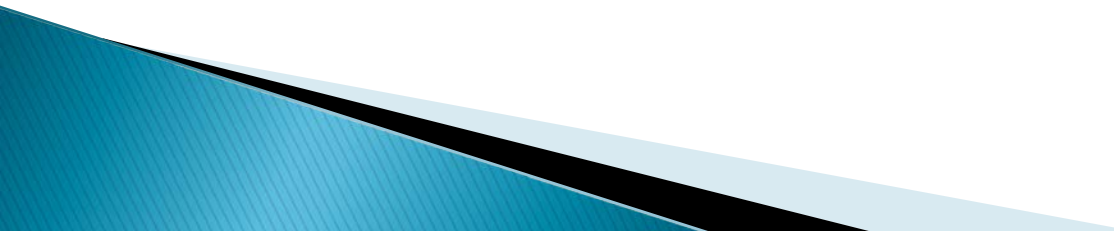


# Reference and writing tips

- ▶ MLA, APA and ASA – three common styles
  - Writing Commons will provide further assistance
- ▶ [Purdue OWL for late night assistance](#)
- ▶ Writing Commons: 4<sup>th</sup> floor library
  - Biweekly graduate writing workshop – Friday, Oct. 18, 1 to 2 p.m.



# Academic honesty (what you don't know CAN hurt you ...)

- ▶ Kent State's [policy on academic honesty](#) does not discuss INTENT – accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism.
  - ▶ Academic honesty protects you and your work as well.
  - ▶ Best practice: Refer back to notes taken while reading to see if something 'you' said is someone else's work. Proactive citation is always key in academic writing/research.
- 



Thanks very much for attending!

Questions?

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# References

- ▶ KSU Library homepage:
  - ▶ <http://www.kent.edu/library/index.cfm>
- ▶ KSU Library skill modules:
  - ▶ <http://libguides.library.kent.edu/tutorials>
- ▶ KSU library VPN information:
  - ▶ <http://www.kent.edu/library/services/offcampus.cfm>
- ▶ KSU Academic Honesty Policy:
  - ▶ [http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?customel\\_d\\_atapageid\\_1976529=2037779](http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?customel_d_atapageid_1976529=2037779)