Organize Your Research Process
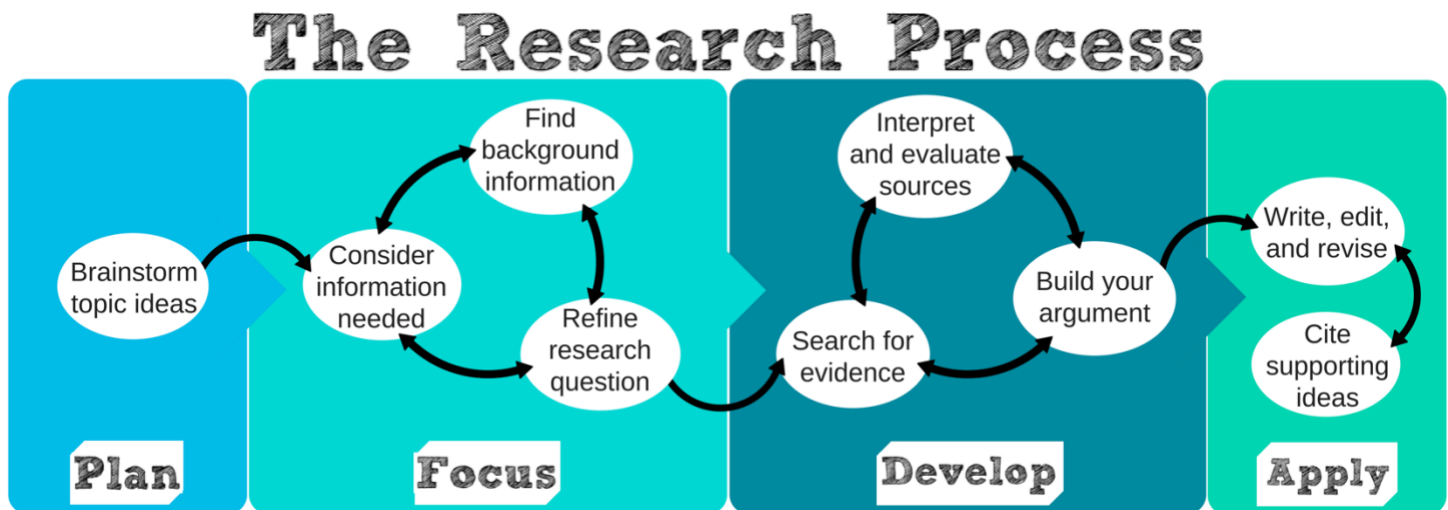
Research 101 Workshops at Musselman Library

Situating Yourself in the Research Process

The Research Process

Make a Plan

1. What is your research topic or question you are working on?
2. What types of sources are you looking for?
3. What are the places you will go to for those sources (Google Scholar, Muscat Plus, etc.)?
4. What are the main terms, concepts, people, events, etc. around your topic?

Research Logs

Keeping a research log sounds formal and like a bit of extra work, but it can be a simple, easy way to keep yourself organized as you are working on several research projects simultaneously. It is one way to pick up the research again without having to figure out where you were, what you were thinking, and what is left to be done. It can also save a lot of time when it comes to writing and citing.

1. As you start to work on a project, **do your online searching in one window and keep your research log in another** (Google Docs, Word online, etc.).
2. **Keep notes to yourself** as you conduct your research – places you have searched, terms you have used, and information gaps you still need to fill.
3. **Make notes on your individual sources**. Do what will help you later – comments on the source, big takeaways, key pages, and key quotations.
4. Save yourself some time later and **create the full, formatted citation for each source** in the required style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).
5. At the end of each time you work on the project, **make notes about you did and need to do next**.

Your Muscat Plus Account

Signing into your Muscat Plus account (use your @Gettysburg.edu login information) allows you to:

1. Pin sources to your favorites.
2. Organize saved sources using labels/tags.
3. Mark saved sources and email them to a group member or send them to citation management software like RefWorks or Zotero.

Most of us do our online searching and reading when we have time in our schedule. If you want to get back to a source later, pin it as a favorite. Or, if you need that source for a later class? Check your list.

Software to Organize Sources

Musselman Library supports two pieces of citation management software, RefWorks and Zotero. Both are online, easily important references from databases or websites, and support write and cite functions in Word or Google Docs. Although they can create citations, they can also be used to collect, organize, and share sources.

Zotero

- Zotero is free software that you can install to your computer. You can add a browser plug-in to important references with a click from library databases, catalogs, or websites.
- The library has an online guide to using Zotero with more detail.
- Interested in the write and cite functions? The word processor plugin is bundled with Zotero and will install automatically for Word. For Google Docs, if you have the browser plugin installed, Zotero will appear as an option in Google Docs.

RefWorks

- RefWorks is software the library subscribes to for your use. Similar to Zotero, it can organize citations from sources, create bibliographies, and format citations in a wide variety of styles.
- Unlike Zotero, it is web browser based with no software to install, besides plugins for your browser if you want to add references and full-text from any website or if you want to install the Write-N-Cite plugin for Word. Refer to the library online guide for more detail.