Types of Information Sources

Information can come from virtually anywhere. The type of information you need will change depending on the question you are trying to answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Sources</th>
<th>Description of the Source</th>
<th>Use this Source . . .</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Library Catalog</strong></td>
<td>Identifies items in the library. Includes books, maps, videos/DVD’s, and more, but no periodical articles.</td>
<td>to find out what items the library owns.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>to find where a specific item is located.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reference Materials</strong></td>
<td>Reference materials include encyclopedias, dictionaries and fact books in print and electronic formats.</td>
<td>when looking for background information on a topic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are two types of encyclopedias – general and subject. General encyclopedias provide overviews on a wide variety of topics. Subject encyclopedias contain entries focusing on one field of study.</td>
<td>when trying to find key ideas, important dates or concepts.</td>
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<td>Examples:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Education (subject encyclopedia)</td>
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<td>Encyclopedia Americana (general encyclopedia)</td>
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<td><strong>Books</strong></td>
<td>Books cover virtually any topic, fact or fiction. For research purposes, you will probably be looking for books that synthesize all the information on one topic. Libraries organize and store their book collections on shelves called “stacks.” We also have books (called e-books) that are available electronically.</td>
<td>when looking for a lot of information on a topic.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>to put your topic in context with other important issues.</td>
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<td>to find historical information.</td>
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<td>to find summaries of research to support an argument.</td>
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<td><strong>Magazines</strong></td>
<td>Magazines publish articles on topics of popular interest and current events. The articles are written by journalists and are for the general public. Magazines, like journals and</td>
<td>to find information or opinions about popular culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to find up-to-date information about current events.</td>
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</table>

(continued on back)
| **under the shelves, and back issues are located in the bound periodicals section.** | **newspapers, are called “periodicals” because they are published at regular intervals throughout the year.** | **to find general articles written for people who are not necessarily specialists in the topic area.**  
**Examples:**  
*Wired*  
*Time Magazine*  
*Business Week*  

| **Millions of articles can be retrieved electronically through the TCTC Library’s databases.** | **Journals**  
Printed journals are shelved in the back area of the TCTC library. The most current issue will be on display, recent issues are kept under the shelves, and back issues are located in the bound periodicals section.  

**Millions of articles can be retrieved electronically through the TCTC Library’s databases.**  

| **Journal articles are written by scholars in an academic or professional field. An editorial board reviews articles to decide whether they should be published. Journal topics may cover very specific topics or narrow fields of research.** | **to find out what has been studied on your topic.**  
**to find bibliographies that point to other relevant research.**  
**Examples:**  
*Journal of Business Strategy*  
*The Historian*  
*Lancet*  

| **Journals are published at periodic intervals, so they are included in the “periodicals” category of publications.**  

| **Newspapers**  
Newspapers are shelved in the back area of the TCTC library. The most current issue will be on display, recent issues are kept under the shelves, and most back issues are discarded.  

**Millions of articles can be retrieved electronically through the TCTC Library’s databases.**  

| **Newspapers provide articles each day about current events and are a good source for local information. Since newspapers are published regularly, they are also called “periodicals.”** | **to find current information about international, national and local events.**  
**to find editorials, commentaries, expert or popular opinions.**  
**Examples:**  
*Wall Street Journal*  
*New York Times*  
*Anderson Independent-Mail*  

| **The Web**  
The Web is a good tool for finding information, but it is usually not the best place to begin academic research.  

| **The Web allows you to access information on the Internet through a browser. One of the main features of the web is the ability to link quickly to other related information; however, you must be selective when using Internet information for research. Anyone can say, be or do anything on the Internet. Make sure your web source is valid.** | **to find current information.**  
**to link to information provided by the library over the Internet.**  
**to find information about companies.**  
**to information from all levels of government – federal to local.**  
**to find both expert and popular opinions.**  

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