The Alkek Library has a variety of resources to help you with your research – from librarians answering questions on chat or in-person to 600+ databases filled with millions of articles from journals, magazines, & newspapers to physical collections of books, DVDs, and maps to ebooks and streaming documentaries.

Below is a shortened example of the research process; however, the process is rarely linear.

### Topics

When you have a topic, you may need to narrow or broaden the topic depending on the assignment instructions and information written about it. To narrow down your topic, you can consider: What, Who, Where, When, & Why

Below is an example brainstorm to narrow down the broad topic Pollution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution</td>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>Last 5 years</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
<td>Effects on human health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash in the ocean</td>
<td>Industrial companies</td>
<td>Last 10 years</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Legislative action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water contamination</td>
<td>Elderly, Children</td>
<td>Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Effects on animals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A potential topic could be “Effects of air pollution on the respiratory health of the elderly”

### Keywords

Library databases are much more particular than Google about the words you type. For example, a search for university in Google may give you results for universities, college, colleges, etc. Our databases will only find results that contain university.

Sometimes the words researchers use are not words that we would use. For example, fracking vs. hydraulic fracturing. That is why it is really important to brainstorm possible keywords before you start searching.

First, identify keywords in your topic. For example: “Effects of air pollution on the respiratory health of the elderly.” Then, think of related terms or synonyms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Air Pollution</th>
<th>Respiratory Health</th>
<th>Elderly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Old people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smog</td>
<td>COPD</td>
<td>Geriatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lung disease</td>
<td>Aged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Finding Background Information

Find overviews & context for topics by searching for the broad terms in reference materials such as encyclopedias. Find these through the GEO 3301 guide or the library catalog & databases. Credo is a collection of online reference books.

### Search for Sources

Search our databases & catalog for sources using keywords. If you are not getting good results, try using some of the alternative keywords you brainstormed.
Types of Resources

Through the library, you can access: peer-reviewed scholarly articles, books, government reports, datasets, maps, magazine & newspaper articles, streaming video, & more.

Peer-Reviewed Articles: Articles that have been reviewed for publication in scholarly journals by experts in the field. A level of quality control. Most of our databases have a checkbox that limits the results to only peer-reviewed journals.

Access Resources

Find out the location or access resources online through the library website. [http://www.library.txstate.edu/](http://www.library.txstate.edu/)

Library Catalog: The catalog lists all library material physically in the building, such as books, kits, models, games, DVDs, etc. It also has ebooks and streaming video and audio. It does not have any articles. The catalog will show you the location of the item, the call number, and if it is available or not.

Research Databases: These databases are mostly collections of scholarly journal articles, but some are not. Some contain newspaper articles, datasets, etc. We have organized the databases by title, by subject, and by type.

Start Your Research: The main search box in the middle of the library homepage. It searches our library catalog and most, but not all, of our databases. It is a good source for articles from scholarly journals, newspapers, and magazines. Use the filter options to limit the results to full-text, peer-reviewed, format, or a certain date range.

Periodical List: This is a list of all of the periodicals that library subscribes to. Periodicals means that it is published periodically, such as four times a year, once a month, daily, etc. You can search for the title of a magazine, journal, or newspaper and find all of the databases it is in. Be sure to look at the dates available.

RefWorks: A citation management tool you can use to export citation information from our databases and organize into folders. Can create bibliographies in different citation styles. Be sure to double-check for errors.

Questions? Ask a Librarian

We can recommend databases, suggest keywords, help narrow down topics, etc.

Rory Elliott is the subject librarian for Geography.

You can ask questions via email or schedule an individual research consultation.

Re19@txstate.edu

Other librarians can also help you:

In Person: On-the-fly help at Research & Information Desk – Alkek 2nd Floor
Chat & Email: [http://askalibrarian.library.txstate.edu/](http://askalibrarian.library.txstate.edu/)
Phone: 512-245-3681