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Debating Armed with Evidence

Posted on July 19, 2011 by Colleen Anderson

Business majors often take classes where they are required to debate an opponent and defend an argument for a topic unfamiliar to them. Where and how can a student in this predicament find facts, figures and other needed evidence to support their assigned position? A recent [Information Today](#) article (July/Aug 2011) by Mike O'Leary, [The Pro-Con Databases: Arguments on Anything](#), mentions an assortment of sources, both subscription and free, providing viewpoints and information to support a position on a contemporary topic. Here is a selected list of sources available to Bryant students:

Subscription Databases Sources:

[CQ Researcher](#) – this library subscription databases provides 20+ page unbiased reports on contemporary topics with the history, background, current situation, outlook, a pro/con position from 2 experts holding opposing stances, a chronology of events, a bibliography and a listing of contacts for more information. For example, if a student was asked to defend a position on the current congressional debate on the debt ceiling, he/she may want to view the [CQ Researcher](#) reports on [the National Debt](#) (3/18/2008) and [the Budget Deficit](#) (12/9/2005).

[Opposing Viewpoints in Context](#) – another subscription database with comprehensive coverage on popular debate topics. This source contains more than 14,000 pro/con viewpoint essays, 5 million periodical articles and nearly 6,000 statistical tables, charts and graphs. Value-added features include images and thousands of podcasts, including podcasts of premier NPR programs. Users can select a topic from the [Issues](#) tab or run a search a topic. For example, our same student could add to his/her evidence on the debt ceiling debate a graph showing the [National Debt 1900-2005](#), along with information gleaned from a number of reference sources, magazines and academic journal articles.

Free Sites:

[ProCon.com](#) – a nonprofit, public charity with a mission of *Promoting critical thinking, education and information citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a straightforward, nonpartisan, primarily pro-con format.* Though limited in coverage—only 42 issues are covered—the site offers unique content that includes the top pro & con quotes on each topic and comments from site users. The most effective way to search [ProCon.com](#) is to select a topic from the available menu options. Information is sufficiently documented with footnotes to sources.

[Opposing Views](#) - presents a question on a controversial issue and invites interested experts to pick a side and weigh in with their arguments. Other experts counter with one opposing argument, and the author of the original argument responds to the counter. The site explains the qualification for their selected experts is...“they are recognized leaders in their field, provide credible information and perspectives, and have a unique experience that provides valuable insight and/or have a notable following.” A green verified check mark near an expert’s name certifies the organization, group or individual’s identity has been confirmed by [Opposing Views](#). The site is a good source for viewpoints, but falls short on academic and statistical content.

[Ask a reference librarian](#) for more sources to find the evidence and build your argument on a debate topic!

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For a little GPS fun this summer why not have Darth Vader tell you where to go?

<http://ow.ly/5QngA> 4 days ago

<http://ow.ly/5PDMP> Our Vice President of Academic Affairs Jose Marie Griffiths and Professor Donald King...

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Dr. Griffiths and Prof King share library love in ProJo OpEd <http://ow.ly/5PDMP> (ProJo reg required) or cached version

<http://ow.ly/5PE5O> 5 days ago

<http://ow.ly/5Pnjm> Get your facts right at your local public library. 5 days ago

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