



LEARNING RESOURCES UNIT

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Student Learning Outcome (SLO)



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LIBRARY

Schauerman Library Web Guides - Current & Controversial Topics

Controversial issues research papers are also known as persuasive papers, pro & con papers, hot topics papers, current issues papers. You can get ideas for topics from the INDEXES of sources like *CQ Researcher*, *Opposing Viewpoints*, and *Taking Sides*. Ask for these indexes at the Reference desk. You can also find topics by browsing the headlines of newspapers and periodicals.

SOURCES: Mostly you will hope to examine a combination of resources: books, periodicals, websites, and other media; or as determined by your professor.

Books: Books take longer to write and be published than periodical articles, thus depending on the topic you choose, you may find there are not many (or any) books on your topic. Very current issues, for instance will not yet have books out about them. Should you have an older, or perennially controversial topic like Global Warming you will find that books go into topics in more depth and detail than articles can.

Some good GENERAL books to consult are:

- Special Encyclopedias on different topics, for instance Encyclopedias of Ethics, Applied Ethics, Bioethics, Religion, Communications, Censorship, Environment. These will provide overviews of issues, and bibliographies
- *Taking Sides* Series feature "expert" opinions on both sides of a variety of issues
- *Opposing Viewpoints* Series feature excerpted articles and a number of different viewpoints on topics
- *Reference Shelf* Series reprints of articles and excerpts from books on issues and trends
- *Information Plus* Series contains many graphs, tables and charts for statistical support
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States* - -contains frequently requested statistics on crime, economy, population, mostly from government sources.
- *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion* opinion surveys on a wide variety of topics. They also have a website <http://www.gallup.com/> Some content is fee based.
- *Historic Documents of _____ (Annual)*

Consult the reference librarian on the best way to search the Millennium catalog for books.

Periodical Articles: Periodicals (journals, magazines, newspapers) are an excellent source of materials on controversial topics. They are current, can provide overviews, points of view, or research, also they can be comparatively brief. News and opinion magazines like *Newsweek*, *Time*, *New Republic*, *Utne Reader*, etc are especially likely to present a particular side of an issue. You can find periodical articles by browsing the latest magazines ranged around the Reference room, or using a print or online index/database to search for articles on your topic. Computer stations in the Reference room and LMTC provide access to databases and most of our databases can be accessed from home. Ask at the Reference desk for the handout on Remote Access.

Print Indexes include:

Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Humanities Index, Social Sciences Index, Los Angeles Times Index, Index to Black Periodicals

Online Indexes suitable for Current issues include:

[EBSCOHost] *MasterFile Premiere*, *CQ Researcher*, *Issues & Controversies (Facts on File)*, *Today's Science (Facts on File)*, *ProQuest Newspaper Database* (which indexes the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Wall Street Journal)

Two special periodicals to consider are:

- *CQ Researcher* (available in print or online) Each issue is devoted to a current controversial topic.
- *Congressional Digest: the Pro and Con Monthly*. Each issue is devoted to a current issue being discussed in Congress

Websites: The web is a fabulous source of material BUT you must be very careful to evaluate the material you find in terms of Authority, Currency, Objectivity, etc. Try some of these authoritative portals and sites:

- *Almanac of Policy Issues* <http://www.policyalmanac.org/>
- *American Civil Liberties Union ACLU* <http://www.aclu.org/>
- *BBC Science* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/hottopics/>
- *Bioethics Issues. National Health Museum* <http://www.accessexcellence.org/AB/IE/>
- *California Senate Office of Research* <http://www.sor.govoffice3.com/>
- *Documents in the News* <http://lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>
- *EnviroLink* <http://www.envirolink.org/>
- *ProCon* <http://www.procon.org/>
- *Public Agenda Online* <http://publicagenda.org/>
- *Taking Sides* <http://www.dushkin.com/takingsides/ts-list.mhtml>
- *Topix.net* - news organized by topic and location. <http://www.topix.net/>
- *The Why Files* <http://whyfiles.org/> Explains the science behind current news stories

Selected Search Tools and Directories:

- *Google* <http://www.google.com>
- *Clusty (ex-Vivisimo)* <http://http://www.clusty.com/>
- *Librarian's Index to the Internet* <http://lii.org/>

Key Terms for Searching Controversial Topics: Use your topics words (and have a few synonyms handy) and add one or more of these useful terms to narrow and focus your search: *argument, debate, problem, condone, allow, pass, ban, prohibit, benefits, hot- button, sides, controversy, opinion, pro, con, for, against, endorse, values, battle, oppose, support, favor, advocate, challenge, advantages, disadvantages, history, viewpoint.*

Document your findings and cite your sources: Use the MLA citation style, or whatever style your Professor requires; handouts and/or handbooks are available from the Reference area.

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