



WRITING GUIDES: Pro/Con, Debates, Position Papers

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Listed below are some hints and recommended resources for locating materials that support or oppose a particular position pro/con and debate papers/speeches. Be careful to not limit yourself to only researching one side of an issue. For example, an article, speech, paper, or report that **supports** a particular issue, such as favoring the importation of prescription drugs, will often also provide you with information that supports an opposing position. Additionally, to effectively argue one side of an issue it is essential to also be familiar with the arguments from the other side of the issue; so don't dismiss an article just because it is not supporting "your" point-of-view.

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Using Eureka to find materials in the CSUS Library

EUREKA is the Library's online catalog. Materials in the Library's collection (books, government documents, videos, etc.,) can be searched for using **EUREKA** by title, author, keyword, call number, etc.

Locate materials with a **Keyword** search on topics like *global warming, religion and america, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, affirmative action, etc.*

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SERIES

The Library subscribes to several resources which include both "pro" and "con" positions on topics. Individual issues in each series will be dedicated to a specific topic. Examples of recent topics are homeland security, the American family, cybercrime, athletes as role models, consumer culture and free trade. The volumes of the series are not shelved together; each volume will have a specific call number.

To locate specific issues: Search the series title (for example: "contemporary world issues") as a **keyword** in **EUREKA** to see a list of the individual titles in each series.

- **Congressional Digest**
Each issue of this monthly publication is dedicated to one specific topic. Background information is presented followed by pro/con arguments from a variety of experts. This periodical is located on 3 North. Individual issues will **not** be listed in EUREKA, but a list of the last few years topics is found in the inside back cover of each issue. Also, this journal is available full text from 1985 in [Academic Search Premier \(Ebsco\)](#)
- **Contemporary World Issues**
Each issue includes articles/essays and primary source material on specific topic. Also included is a chronology, biographical sketches, a bibliography of abstracts from print and nonprint sources for additional research.
- **Current Controversies**
Each volume looks at specific controversies about a broader topic. For example, the volume on Family Violence addresses the question of defining the topic of family violence, questioning the prevalence of family violence, describing the victims of family violence, and if specific efforts actually help or hinder the reduction of family violence. Includes reprints of articles and excerpts from a variety of sources presented in a pro/con format. Includes a list of organizations for further research.
- **The Information Series on Current Topics**

Each volume is on a broad topic with statistics, charts, research, discussions on a variety of subtopics. There is an emphasis on the presentation of scientific studies and surveys. The most recent volumes in this series are located in the Reference Collection on 2 North.

- **Opposing Viewpoints**

Each volume includes both primary and secondary sources from a variety of perspectives on a single topic. Sources include eyewitness reports, scholarly journals, government documents, excerpts from books, etc. Also includes a list of organizations for further research.

- **The Reference Shelf**

Each issue is on a specific topic and provides background information and discussion from various points of view and includes editorials, reprints of articles, and excerpts from books. There is also a bibliography that lists books, web sites, and abstracts of additional articles on the subject.

- **Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial...**

Presented in a pro/con format each volume looks at a broad topic such as "*clashing views on political issues*." Within each volume are pro/con readings on issues within the broader topic. Again, for the example noted above, issues include debates on the electoral college, Bush v. Gore, taxes, immigration, and America's position as a world leader. Readings come from a variety of sources and points of view.

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DATABASES

CSUS Library subscribes to over 100 databases. Most of these databases are subject specific. For example there are databases specific to business topics, science topics, education topics, etc. Click to see an [alphabetical list of databases](#). Open the box **SPECIFIC SUBJECTS** to select databases by subject.

Hints: Begin your database search with a keyword search on your topic. Consider including some of the following keywords in the search to get appropriate articles:

analysis	evaluation	comparative analysis	speech
editorial	public opinion	political aspects	proponents
opinion	surveys	research	opponents
commentary			

Suggested databases to begin your search are:

- [CQ Library](#)

CQ Library includes 4 databases, including the **CQ Researcher Online**. Select the CQ Researcher Online from CQ Library home page. Choose from a list of recent reports or search for other reports by topic. Reports include pro/con discussion, background information, outlook analysis, and a chronology

- [Academic Search Premier \(Ebsco\)](#)

Search your topic as a keyword search and include a term from the [Hints](#) listed above. Limit to full text and Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals. Additional limits include *Document Type*: editorial, case study, interview, or speech and/or primary source document in **Publication Type**.

- [RAND California](http://ca.rand.org/) (<http://ca.rand.org/>)

RAND California's Research Publications is a searchable index of publications from leading California public policy and research institutions. Search the [Rand Publications home page](#) to find online commentaries, issue papers, and research briefs. This web site is free to the public.

Newspaper Databases

- [Lexis-Nexis: Academic Universe](#)

Full text of world newspapers, magazines, wire services, etc., including **The Los Angeles Times** and **The New York Times**. Select **News** from the Lexis Nexis home page then choose a News Category, News Source, and Date Range from the pull-down menus. To retrieve newspaper editorials add the keyword **editorial** to your search.

- [Proquest Newsstand](#)

An extensive collection of US and international full text newspapers including **The Sacramento Bee** and **The New York Times**. Begin in **Advanced Search**. Type in your topic and change the box from **Citation and document text** to either **Abstract** or **Subject**. Limit your search to editorials by typing editorial in the next box and changing **Citation and document text** to **Document Type**. Limit further by adjusting the Date Range and choosing Full text documents only.

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WEB SITES

- **The Brookings Institute** <http://www.brookings.edu/default.htm>
A nonpartisan private research institution that publishes analysis and commentary, research reports, and policy briefs on a broad range of topics.
- **Deatabase** <http://www.idebate.org/deatabase/index.php>
From the International Debate Education Association this online debate topic database has arguments for and against hundreds of debating Topics, written by expert debaters, judges and coaches. Also included are background summaries, links to web sites of interest and recommended books, example motions and user comments. Users can search for topics by theme, keyword, or browse the complete topic list.
- **Documents in the News: Current Events Research** <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>
From the University of Michigan, this site includes thousands of documents that can be used for debates and pro/con analysis for hundreds of topics. There is a cumulative index by topic for documents from 1995-2003. There is a separate archive of documents for 2003, 2004, and 2005.
- **National Center for Policy Analysis** <http://www.ncpa.org/newdpd/index.php>
A nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. The [Both Sides](#) page provides pro/con discussion on a variety of public policy issues. Streaming video of some debates are available.
- **OpenDemocracy** <http://www.opendemocracy.net/home/index.jsp>
A team of writers from around the world participate in online debates. Content arranged by topic, theme or geographical region. Users are invited to participate in the debates.
- **ProCon.org** <http://www.procon.org/>
"ProCon.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation whose purpose is to educate the public about controversial issues by presenting facts, news, and thousands of diverse opinions in a pro-con format." Each topic also includes a "One Minute" overview and Top 10 Pro/Cons. As appropriate, each topic may also include a timeline, summary, legal precedents, state laws, public opinion polls, international comparisons, etc.
- **Public Agenda** <http://www.publicagenda.org/>
A nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research organization. Issue Guides on a variety of broad topics that include background information, public opinion analysis, and additional resources for research. Research studies analyze public opinion and poll results on specific topics.
- **The Urban Institute** <http://urban.org/index.cfm>
A nonpartisan economic and social policy research institution. Much of the research is done by [10 policy centers](#). Users can browse by topic or author or search for reports by keyword.
- **Yahoo News** <http://news.yahoo.com/>
An OPINION section is located at the bottom of the Yahoo News page. This section includes editorials from newspapers, magazines, web sites, and blogs,

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OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Another way to find arguments for and against controversial topics is through advocacy groups and organizations. Many sites publish reports and articles that support their mission and goals. To find these organizations perform an **Advanced** search in your favorite search engine (Yahoo, Google, etc.) and limit your search to **.org** results. For example, a Yahoo search on "gun control", limited to ".org" found both the *NRA.org* and *Handguncontrol.org*; two different organizations with opposite goals.

- [Statistical Abstract of the United States](#)
Also available at 2 North Ref HA 202
This is a great starting point for locating statistics on almost any topic on the United States.
Also includes some international statistics.
See the Reference Librarian for more statistical resources.
- The Library publishes over 100 [Research Guides](#) on many different subjects. The guides suggest subject specific encyclopedias, handbooks, statistical resources, databases, and web sites and are a great research tool.

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