

St Thomas More RC Academy Library

EPQ Research.....let's go!



Miss Edwards 2017

***“The desire for knowledge like the thirst of riches
increases ever with the acquisition of it¹.”***

¹ The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Laurence Sterne (1767)

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1. Introduction...let's go beyond one click!

Welcome to this guide for Sixth Form EPQ students on effective research.

I hope that you take the time to read it and that you find some, if not all of it useful.

It does not claim to be a comprehensive guide to all possibilities. In our digital age of ever expanding information sources nothing can. But I hope that it will give you some pointers, even if you are an experienced researcher, as you set out on your research process.

Before the advent of the internet, libraries were the custodians of information. A rather “closed world” where you had to be “in the know” to be “able to know”. Now your PC and phone have opened up access to vast databases of information and research. Immense knowledge can be available at the click of a button.

So it should all be easy....shouldn't it?

But where to start?

How do you know what is available?

Is all information “good information”?

How do you narrow down those 750,000 hits?

Considering these questions it's no wonder that we can all suffer from information overload. Our research strategies become ineffective and as result time inefficient and potentially frustrating.

So here are some helpful suggestions to help you navigate the world of information.....as I said not exhaustive but hopefully useful.

All the libraries and website addresses mentioned should appear as footnotes. Please let me know if any of these links do not work.

2. Looking for the Big Idea

Strapline.....

“Nothing is more dangerous than an idea, when you only have one idea².

Here are some pointers for coming up with an idea, developing an idea or even for changing your mind. Take some time to listen and to read.

<http://theconversation.com/uk>

www.open.edu/openlearn

<http://aeon.co/>

<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk>

<http://www.intelligencesquared.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05>

<http://bigthink.com>

www.ted.com/talks

End Note - “If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”

Who said that?

² Alain (Emile Chartier) Remarks on Religion (1938)

3. Libraries

Our school library may be small but it does have some excellent book stock. You can browse the Library Catalogue which can be accessed via any computer. If you cannot find what you want, please ask.

Here is a very brief subject guide to help you as you browse the shelves.

Philosophy	100	Psychology	150
Social Science	300-	Environment	304.2
Languages	400-	Science	500-
Mathematics	510	Human Biology	612
Sport	796	Literature	820
History	940-		

Public libraries

I strongly recommend that you all join North Tyneside³ and Newcastle City Libraries⁴. They have extensive book stocks and reserve archive collections looked after by helpful librarians. Their catalogues are searchable online.

What you may not know is that they also offer a “24 hour library”. Newcastle library in particular has an impressive collection of premium websites which are free access for members

These include the Oxford Reference Suite, the Oxford English Dictionary (all 21,730 pages of it!), The Times Digital Archive and the Encyclopedia Britannica.

³ <http://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/146/libraries>

⁴ <https://library.newcastle.gov.uk/web/arena>

They are called premium websites because they are the leaders in their field...so this is a very useful and free resource.

We are fortunate in the North East to have several universities together with their libraries on our doorstep. Newcastle University Library⁵ welcomes St Thomas More RC Academy Sixth Form students to become associate members. You will gain a lot from this!

On the subject of university libraries please do look at some of their websites. Even as a non-member you can find a wealth of subject guides, reading lists, podcasts and tutorials. Far from being insular, ivory towers of learning, the universities are welcoming researchers to share their resources and expertise.

Ones I often use include:-

Cambridge University⁶, The Oxford Bodleian⁷, the University of Manchester⁸.

But search around some others....

Other Libraries

In the centre of Newcastle there is a rather special library, The Literary and Philosophical Society⁹. It's the largest, private subscription library outside London and as its name suggests specialises in the arts and humanities. It is not free to join but its catalogue is online and open access. However it is free to visit and I recommend that you do.....the staff are hugely knowledgeable if a little eccentric!

⁵ <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/>

⁶ <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/>

⁷ <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

⁸ <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/>

⁹ <http://www.litandphil.org.uk/>

The UK's preeminent library is of course the British Library¹⁰ with its vast collection of over 150 million items. Currently there is a huge programme of digitization taking place to make their holdings more accessible.

In the USA the Library of Congress¹¹ in Washington is the world's largest. Their website is "awesome"...as they say across the pond.

There are many other libraries which you could investigate. Many museums, official organisations, professional bodies, charities and newspapers will have their own libraries and archives.

4. Newspapers

Obviously useful for the currency of their information and their opinion. Most have an online presence which is free to access. However some of their archives are for subscribers only.

Try...

The Times Digital Archive and British library 19th Century Newspapers available through Newcastle City Library online.

The Financial Times¹² - freely available on school computers.

The Paper Boy¹³ - list of UK newspapers with a meta search engine.

5. The BBC

Its mission is "to inform, educate and to entertain".

¹⁰ <https://www.bl.uk/>

¹¹ <https://www.loc.gov/>

¹² <https://www.ft.com>

¹³ <https://www.thepaperboy.com/uk/>

So let's leave "Strictly" behind and get serious. The BBC has just reorganised its online content and a lot of its educational content is no longer archived, however it remains a tour de force for current information, intellectual comment and analysis.

Try...

Thinking Allowed¹⁴, Front Row¹⁵, History Extra¹⁶, BBC World Service podcasts¹⁷, iWonder¹⁸ and many others.

6. Academic Journals

This may well be one of the most difficult areas for you to research. We all know how frustrating it is to come across the perfect article only to find access is denied after just a few lines. However there are some options for you.

The Access to Research Scheme¹⁹ - accessed through the public library network.

Google Scholar²⁰

DOAJ²¹ (Directory of Open Access Journals)

JURN²² (stands for whatever you want it to be)

JSTOR²³ (sign up and you can get VERY limited free access)

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05>

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qsq5>

¹⁶ <http://www.historyextra.com/>

¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldserviceradio>

¹⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iwonder>

¹⁹ <http://accesstoresearch.pls.org.uk/>

²⁰ <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>

²¹ <https://doaj.org/>

²² www.jurn.org

²³ <https://support.jstor.org/hc/en-us/articles/115004760028-MyJSTOR-How-to-Register-Get-Free-Access-to-Content>

There are lots of other Directories....often run by universities, some specialising in certain subject areas. However the ones listed above are the ones I've found most useful/reliable.

Words of warning, there is no guarantee that the article that you want will be indexed on these sites, but you have a far better chance of finding sources here than doing a random google search.

Second word of warning, navigating these databases is often not very intuitive, you will need to use some search modifiers/operators to get successful results...but more about that later. In the meantime look at the help sections on the site.

7. Free Books

Sounds too good to be true.....but there are ways of getting access to many books online. Obviously there is no guarantee that they will be the ones that you want but it's worth a try.

[Project Gutenberg](https://www.gutenberg.org/)²⁴ , [Google Books](https://books.google.co.uk/)²⁵ , open access on [JSTOR](https://about.jstor.org/whats-in-jstor/books/open-access-books-jstor/)²⁶ , [Directory of Open Access Books](https://www.doabooks.org/)²⁷.

²⁴ <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

²⁵ <https://books.google.co.uk/>

²⁶ <https://about.jstor.org/whats-in-jstor/books/open-access-books-jstor/>

²⁷ <https://www.doabooks.org/>

8. Some “Big Websites”

You may be familiar with some of these general, “go-to” websites already. They are all reliable, comprehensive and useful.

The Office of National Statistics²⁸– current facts and figures from all government departments.

The UK Government Hub²⁹

The National Archives³⁰

The Smithsonian³¹ (World’s largest museum)

The Google Cultural Institute³²– public domain images from the world’s greatest museums and galleries.

COPAC³³ – merged online catalogue of major university, national and specialist libraries.

The Churchill Archive³⁴– digital library of primary sources relating to modern international history.

The World Bank³⁵

CIA World Factbook³⁶

Debatabase³⁷ - ideas for debates.

²⁸ <https://www.statistics.gov.uk>

²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk>

³⁰ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

³¹ <https://www.si.edu/>

³² <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/>

³³ <http://copac.jisc.ac.uk/>

³⁴ <http://www.churchillarchive.com/>

³⁵ <http://www.worldbank.org/>

³⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

³⁷ <https://idebate.org/debatabase>

9. Googlefinding your way or wading through treacle?

The web is now so huge that it might appear impossible to navigate. The information that we need is often hard to find. For most of us researching means “Googling it”. We pop a word(s) in and see what pops up. Now this works well a lot of the time. It is quick, easy and mostly successful. However as our research becomes more complicated, more “niche” this search technique becomes less satisfactory. We need to sort the wheat from the chaff. We need to start using Advanced Search and Google modifiers/operators.

It may take a bit of practise, a bit of trial and error, but time spent learning how to modify/tailor your searches now will save you time in the long run. There are many guides available online, choose a current one with some basic “how to” examples and have a go.

Some of the ones I find most useful are:-

“ “ links search terms together to find exact phrase.

“site.ac.uk” - limits searches to UK universities.

“intitle:” - limits searches to the title of a website.

“ -“ - deletes terms from a search. E.g. the classic “jaguar speed – car”. Useful if you want to know

about a fast land mammal but are not so bothered by luxury, executive vehicles.

These are just a few examples.

10. Online Courses.....time to MOOC?

MOOC (massive, open, online course)

These are useful for learning about just about anything. High quality, free online courses from universities and specialist organisations. You can look at courses related to your subject area or general ones on study skills and research techniques. You can even do one on completing your EPQ!³⁸

Try ..

The MOOC Search Engine³⁹

Future Learn⁴⁰

Open Learn⁴¹- from the Open University

More specialist sites with a more scientific slant are...

Udacity⁴², The Khan Academy⁴³ and Coursera⁴⁴.

³⁸ <http://www.bath.ac.uk/study/moocs/>

³⁹ <http://mooc.org/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

⁴¹ <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

⁴² <https://www.udacity.com/>

⁴³ <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.coursera.org/>

Thank you to Dr Powell for recommending the three above.

11. Now you have found it...it's time to cite and credit it.

You have by now been busy collecting information, formulating ideas, writing away and generally making progress in your research. What you may not have been doing is recording the sources you have been using.

Oh dear! Time for some capital letters.

KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR SOURCES AS YOU GO ALONG

There will be a lot more information to come on how to do citations, references, bibliographies and how to avoid plagiarism in another guide.

But in the meantime I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to keep a record **NOW**. You will forget which sources you have used and it will take time to retrace your steps, time that can be better utilised. At best it will waste time at worst you lay yourself open to the possibility of plagiarism.

In the early stages of your research I recommend you use the "Citations and Bibliographies" tool within MS Word. If

you are not sure how to do this there are plenty of guides online or try this one from the University of Aberystwyth⁴⁵. Alternatively you can use organisational software such as Evernote⁴⁶ which helps you make a note of things as you go along.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDfgdwMBPfc>

⁴⁵ <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/information-services/pdf/course-material/citations-and-bibliography-041011.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://evernote.com/>