

Dear students and parent/teachers,

I will once again repeat my instructions on researching topics.

1. You must read the assigned material first.
2. You must brainstorm the topic.
3. You must consult encyclopedia and other reference works.
4. You must go to the library and search in books.
5. Then and only then should you use the Internet.
6. Follow closely the instructions below by the insightful Dr. Skip Knox.

Study Guide for Library Research

Start here, in the library. Always. Increasingly I find students turning to the Internet first and the library second, or even third (after CD-ROMs), or even giving up because the answer cannot be located in electronic media. For this course, break yourself of the habit.

Browsing the stacks. I cannot recommend this too highly. You should browse through the actual stacks, once you have your research topic in mind. Get in the habit of this. Even when you have a specific book in mind, its call number in hand, take the time to look at the books nearby. You will deepen your research thereby.

Go to the Reference section of the library. Here you will find all sorts of interesting treasures, including dictionaries of people and events, chronologies, and so on. The books here are organized on the same library classification system. The only difference is, you can't check these books out. Bring your notebook.

And don't disdain to visit the juvenile section. Sure, you won't find groundbreaking research there, but you will sometimes find explanations of things otherwise hard to find. And sometimes it's worthwhile to cover even familiar ground from a different perspective.

The nature of publishing and copyright is such that scholarly journals and monographs will not appear on the Net, nor is this likely to change any time soon. Therefore, no research even begins to be complete unless you have read books and journals. Start with books, continue with books, end with books. That's where scholarly research is published.

Use the Internet only as a supplement, an additional place to look after you have done some serious research. **Not only is there very little scholarly publishing on-line (there is some), but a great deal of what you find is either shoddy work, is trivial, or is outright nonsense.** You will be able to pick your way through this rubbish heap and recognize the genuine treasures buried there if you have done your research and already have a basic understanding of the topic you are researching.

I'll state this plainly: do not use encyclopedias for your papers. Do not use the Internet for your papers unless I explicitly allow it.

Mr. Carey heartily agrees.

So, how then is this demonstrated by mad professor Carey??

I am soooo glad you asked!!

This week I am researching Darwin and his book the Descent of Man. For a couple of weeks I have been planning and brainstorming this topic. I possess a good deal of knowledge already but nothing specific to his particular ideas concerning human evolution. I began my search in the library with books about the topic. Knowing full well I could never read all of Darwin's book, I selected two books by scholars that summarized the chapters pertinent to my topic. I cross-referenced these works with encyclopedia articles, Tapestry resources, and other science authors to establish that they all basically agreed with one another on the important issues Darwin developed. So far, so good. As I was reading I took many notes so I could remember and clearly comprehend his ideas. I returned to the library a few more times for further research as the books I have been reading refer to other books and new ideas that I needed to track down. Only then, did I utilize the "rubbish heap of the Internet" for more information. It was there that I discovered interesting quotes and a source for the complete works of Darwin. I am just now writing my discussion outline to present this riveting and stupendous material in class.

But, you say, fine for you the teacher but how should I approach my topic??

Soooo, glad you asked again!!

Let us take the mapungubwe empire mini-report for example. I recently spent two hours researching this topic. I first read our text Making of Modern Africa. Because I did not have immediate access to a library, I searched the Internet. I immediately found www.mapungubwe.com, which was useful. However, the rest were quite random and I wasted precious time from my life searching Internet trash. Mistake! I next referred to a world history school textbook. Once upon a time, teachers actually wanted students to read and study them. Shocking, no? It was in this ancient and inscrutable text that I discovered that Mapungubwe might not be the most common name for this civilization. Indeed, both textbooks referenced South Africa and great Zimbabwe. Often spellings and names change with time and different sources. Next, I consulted World book encyclopedia, which was a wealth of easily found and cross-referenced information! I now learned that the Mapungubwe were a people that spoke Bantu and lived in the Southeast of Africa by the Limpopo River (made famous in Kipling's Elephant Child) and migrated to Zimbabwe. So now, with a little historical knowledge, I asked myself, "what was that area, people, religion, culture, economy, etc... like?" Then I utilized the Tapestry website to behold many excellent history and geography sources. O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!' I chortled in my joy.

There you simply have it. I would only suggest that students please be more attentive in class as this was all explained before and is laborious for me to write about!!!!