Glendale College Library Information Competency Workshops
Research Process—Outline

**Core Competencies / Learning Outcomes**

1. Recognize the need for information and define a research topic by:
   a. Articulating a research question, problem, or issue
   b. Obtaining background information to identify and define key concepts and terminology related to the topic

2. Develop and implement an effective search strategy appropriate for an information need by:
   c. Identifying search terms appropriate to the research tool and the topic

3. Locate and retrieve information by:
   a. Using the library’s print and online resources effectively

**Preparation**

- **Distribute** Research Process student handout/worksheet.
- **Be ready to display the following items as posted on this workshop’s CampusGuide,** http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/research
  - The Research Process video
  - Workshop Quiz

1. **Introduction** - Introduce yourself and welcome students to the library and the workshop. Take care of bureaucratic business, explaining the attendance roster, sharing the session agenda, and answering questions students may have. (2 minutes)

2. **Show Credo Video - The Research Process** (3½ minutes)

3. **Students conduct PREsearch** (15 minutes)
   - Assign first row of students to use **Britannica Academic**
   - Assign second row of students to use **Wikipedia**
   - Assign third row of students to use **Credo Reference**
   
   **NOTE:** All of these resources have direct URL hyperlinks on the workshop’s CampusGuide

Instruct all students to search for information related to the topic of renewable energy. All three suggested reference sources (**Britannica Academic**, **Wikipedia**, and **Credo Reference**) contain dedicated entries entitled “renewable energy.” Instruct students to read the entry they locate and note—on the worksheet where indicated—5 new words/concepts learned and one cool fact. Circulate around the room to consult with students as needed.

Have at least one student from each row quickly share what s/he found (e.g. important terms, people, events). Review and discuss what the students discover and emphasize the usefulness of reference sources—including **Wikipedia**—as sources for background information at the beginning of the Research Process (which is why we call this stage “PREsearch”), but very rarely to use as final sources in a college project.

4. **Students create RESEARCH QUESTION** (10 minutes)
   Review with students the tips for creating a good research question that are listed on the worksheet and the workshop’s CampusGuide. Briefly describe some of the techniques to focus a research question so it’s “just right” in scope—by a specific geographic area, by a specific social group/demographic, or by a sub-topic or special aspect of the larger issue. The CampusGuide for
this workshop displays model research questions that illustrate each of these techniques. Share these examples with students.

On p. 2 of the worksheets in the box labeled Ⓐ, Ask students to write one question based on what they discovered in their PREsearch that is of personal interest. If students can’t think of anything, ask them to use one of the four sample questions listed on the CampusGuide, the last of which is…

"How can Californians use hydroelectric power without harming the environment?"

Recommended as time allows: Ask students to volunteer sharing their original questions and discuss how those questions successfully narrow the larger topic.

5. Students brainstorm SEARCH TERMS (10 minutes)

- As an introduction to this activity, explain to students that the process of searching for information on a topic often requires flexibility on their part when it comes to the words they use as search terms. Choose a concept to briefly model (2 or 3 min’s maximum), such as “climate change.” Share suggested methods to brainstorm related terms, including…
  - Consider synonyms, such as “global warming"
  - Consider related terms and specific aspects, such as “extreme weather,” “greenhouse gas levels,” or “environmental policy”
- Instruct students to circle the main concepts in the research question they wrote in the box labeled Ⓐ.
- Next, in the box labeled Ⓑ, have students brainstorm additional search terms for each main concept circled in the research question.
- Then, instruct each student to pass her/his worksheet to the student seated on her/his right. In the box labeled Ⓒ, direct the second student to list suggestions for additional words and concepts that might be used as search terms.
- Return worksheet to original student. Have students review the words & concepts notated, and consider them when choosing the best search terms to try in completing the next workshop activity.

6. Students SEARCH FOR INFORMATION in a library database (13 minutes)

Following instructions on the worksheet, guide students to search for articles in a general purpose database of your choice, such as Academic Search Complete, Opposing Viewpoints in Context, or ProQuest Research Library.

Briefly demonstrate how to open the database; point out that all library databases can be accessed by GCC students from home, free-of-cost; and quickly demonstrate how to use the database’s Advanced Search function to input multiple search terms linked by AND or OR. Remember: the objective of this workshop is to introduce students to the full cycle of the research process, not to become expert users of a database; there is a separate 60-minute workshop independently dedicated to using Library Databases. So briefly show students how to get to one database, demonstrate the basics of how to use it, and move on to let students explore independently.
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Students complete item #3 on the worksheet, locating one article that seems useful in relation to their chosen research question. When students have finished the worksheet and as time allows, facilitate a class share-out, reviewing discoveries and answering questions. Remind students that more advanced strategies to search for articles are introduced in the separate workshop entitled *Library Databases*.

7. **Wrap-up & post-survey** (5 minutes)
Direct students to the link for the Post-Quiz included on the workshop CampusGuide, [http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/research](http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/research), and ask them to answer the questions posted there.

Encourage students to take other workshops and/or Library credit classes such as LIB 190 or LIB 191 to further improve their research skills.