UGS 303: Journalism And/In Democracy
Find Background Information - Guide

Find Background Information in the Libraries

The Libraries have thousands of subject-specific encyclopedias, both online and in print. Use them to find information such as topic overviews, histories of the country you selected and of US policy toward that country, statistics and demographics.

Online Encyclopedias
→ Start here: www.lib.utexas.edu > Research Tools > Find Articles Using Databases

- Gale Virtual Reference Library: Search across hundreds of subject-specific encyclopedias.
  TIP: Getting too many irrelevant results? Try switching from keyword to document title search or adding a second word using "and" (example: Pakistan and United States)
- Daily Life Through History: Search for the name of your country to find information about history, culture and daily life throughout history.

Print Encyclopedias
→ Start here: www.lib.utexas.edu > Research Tools > Library Catalog

Step 1:
Enter your keywords and then select **PCL Reference** from the drop down list. This limits your search to the reference collection in PCL, the main library.

OR

Enter your keywords and 'encyclopedias.' This narrows your search to encyclopedias in all the libraries related to your keywords.
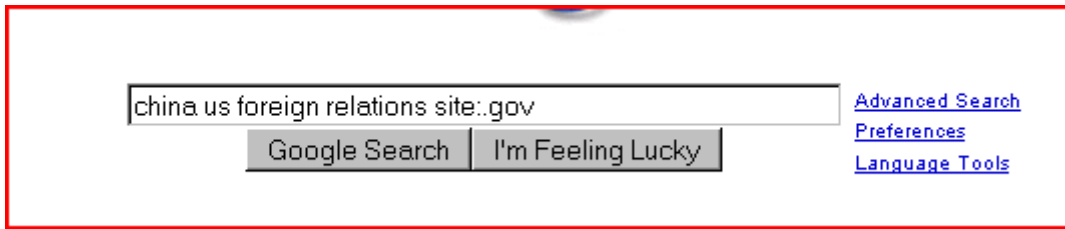
Step 2:
Find a useful source and click on the title to get to the full record. Use the *Subject* terms**,** which are like tags librarians assign to arrange books by topic, to find other sources on your topic.

| Subject | United States -- Foreign relations -- China -- Encyclopedias. |
| | China -- Foreign relations -- United States -- Encyclopedias. |

Find Background Information on the Web

Step 1: Think about the type of information you want and where it might be published. For example, US Government agencies such as the CIA and the State Department collect and publish information about other countries, as well as information about US foreign policy. Many think tanks and organizations also analyze foreign countries and foreign policy. You may also find information from a university research center or professor on a university web site.

Step 2: Use Google's site limit to focus your search. This example only searches sites ending in .gov.

china us foreign relations site:.gov	Advanced Search
Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky	Preferences
	Language Tools

Evaluate Information

Whether you find information on the Web or through the Libraries web site, you should always critically evaluate the information you find. Consider all of the following factors when evaluating information.

Authority	❑ Who wrote it?
	❑ What are their qualifications to write about the topic?
	❑ Who published/hosted it?
	❑ Is the publisher/host reputable?
Objectivity	❑ Is this fact or opinion?
	❑ Is it biased? If so, how does the bias affect the information?
Accuracy	❑ Is this true?
	❑ Can you tell where they got their information?
	❑ Can you find this information elsewhere?
Currency	❑ When was the information published or last updated?
	❑ Is it current enough for your research?

Get Help and Create your APA Citation

- **Course Librarian:** Michele Ostrow, micheleo@austin.utexas.edu, 495-4534
- **IM a Librarian:** www.lib.utexas.edu/ask
- **NoodleBib:** www.lib.utexas.edu/noodlebib - Online tool that helps you create APA citations which you can then download as Word documents.