Information Seeking Strategies

The next step of the Big6 research process is Information Seeking Strategies.

Information seeking strategies does not mean how you seek out your information. That will come in a later step of the Big6 process. Rather, information seeking skills means that you begin to think about and identify all of the possible sources where you can find your information, including sources that are specific to the types of information you will need, which you identified in the step, task definition.

Information seeking strategies addresses TWO tasks:

1.) First, identify ALL the possible sources for your information;
2.) Determine and select the BEST sources from that list to help you address your information problem (answer your research question; support your research thesis, etc.).

"NO, It's NOT All on the Internet!!"

During the Information Seeking Strategies step, you should be asking yourself:

- Which sources will provide answers to your questions quickly and easily?
- Which sources will provide reliable information?

To begin brainstorming possible sources of information, think about the types of sources you will need to find information on your topic. With that said, how do you know what sources will help you with certain research tasks if you are not familiar with the sources you have to use? Here's my answer to that question... I STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you visit your high school library now or your college library and/or your college library Web site at your earliest convenience once you are enrolled or on campus.

Take some time at the beginning of your first semester to go to the library when you have at least an hour available to explore the electronic resources available to you.

Sit down and access each of the databases your college library provides access to, and make a note of the subject or specialty areas covered in each one. Keep these notes handy so you can refer to them as you start each research assignment. Think about the types of sources that you will need to find information on your topic.

If you need:

- **general information**, use books, references, encyclopedias, Web pages, databases.
- **current facts and statistics**, use magazine and news articles, almanacs, Web pages, current pamphlets, databases.
- **historical information**, use books, references, encyclopedias, Web pages.
- **opinions**, use magazines and news articles, Web pages, databases.
- **maps, images, charts**, use Web pages, almanacs, references.
- **breaking news**, use online magazines and news indexes/databases, and news Web sites.
- **broadcast information**, use television and radio programs.
No matter what your topic when you are in college, ALWAYS, AND I MEAN ALWAYS, use scholarly sources if your professor specifies that you must use them! NOTHING WILL EARN A ZERO FASTER IN COLLEGE (well, except for maybe plagiarism) THAN USING POPULAR SOURCES WHEN SCHOLARLY SOURCES ARE REQUIRED.

You should also consider the purpose of your research project:

Do you want to:

- Inform?
- Persuade?
- Entertain?
- Describe a Process?

The information sources you choose will depend upon your thesis statement or topic focus, the questions you want to answer, and the requirements of the assignment. Those requirements should be clear to you since that is part of the first Big6 step, task definition.

When in doubt for source ideas, you can always ask your teacher, professor, or librarian. They should be able to provide you with a list of useful sources for each assignment, although college professors may only give you a couple of suggestions, because they expect you to learn how to find your sources on your own.

Identifying the Best and Most Reliable Sources of Information -

Sources of information are not always reliable. That’s really not a surprise to anyone that spends time online.

There are many factors to consider when selecting the BEST sources to use:

- Is the information factual?
- Is the information credible?
- Is the information current? Does it matter if it’s current?
- Where did the information come from?
- Who wrote the information? Is the person an expert?
- Is the organization recognized as a leader in the field?
- Is the information an opinion? Is the information fair and objective?
- Is the information well organized and easy to understand?
- Is the information free from spelling and grammatical errors?