

## Using Library Resources

To write a sociological paper, there are **many sociological sources available at the James Gibson Library, at Brock**. You might benefit from going on a library tour to see how things are organized, or from talking to someone at the library who can direct you with a specific search. This section of the handbook describes some sociological web sites, links and directories, to help you along with your search. It also provides some ideas on how to begin your research, and to do a search.

As a student of sociology, you may have many different assignments and papers due that require research. You may be wondering, **“How do I find sociological sources, for my paper?” “What is a Sociological Topic?”** One problem is that students may be taking sociology along side other subjects that concentrate on similar issues and topics. It is important to remember that **a sociological perspective on a topic is unique and different than the approach taken by psychology, or perhaps child studies, as related social sciences disciplines.**

Let us consider **how to begin your library research**. It is a good idea to start as soon as possible, so there will be enough time to find material in the library, or request it from another source. Do not expect that one or two trips to the library will do. Markers can see when a student has gathered sources which are “on topic”, but which do not have the coherence a thorough library search produces. You may also need to request books on loan, or use the interlibrary loan service (**RACER**), and that is another reason to give yourself lots of time.

In order to **gain control of your topic**, you must take steps to sufficiently **familiarize yourself with the sociological literature on it**. If you do not make this effort, you may waste significant amounts of time, researching irrelevant issues, or you may end up trying to formulate a paper with bits and pieces of information that you cannot assimilate because a solid foundation of understanding has not been established. **Whether or not a student is ‘in control’ of his or her topic will always be evident to the marker.** This will not be possible unless considerable effort is made on your part and you have blocked out sufficient library research time in your schedule.

Note that every book or journal article leads you to others on the topic, listed in the bibliography. Try to **identify the major authors in the area**; they will be cited frequently by other authors. Do your best to **find works by and about Canadians** if your focus is on a Canadian issue. **Go back to the library and look up interesting references** you have identified from the material you have already gathered.

You might **begin your search by checking the Reserve Collection** at the library. Your professor may have put some readings on reserve that are relevant to your topic. You can check Reserves, in the library, by course or professor in the Brock Library Catalogue. Your professor will let you know if any course related, supplemental readings have been placed on reserve for you to access. Some of these holdings may be useful sources for your paper.

The Reference Librarians in the Brock Library compile **Subject Guides** of all majors subjects taught at the university. **The Sociology Subject Guide**, for example, lists key reference books and journal indexes. It also provides brief instructions on how to search the Brock on-line catalogue. The Reference Department has compiled these sources into one concise page to make library research easier for you. Take advantage of this resource as it gives you the tools for familiarizing yourself with a topic and can only benefit the outcome of your paper.

To find **books and documents** on your topic, **use the library catalogue**, which has listings of the Library's resources. If you wish to find a particular work whose title, author or call number you know, **use the TITLE, AUTHOR or CALL NUMBER** options to find out its location in the library. Consult the Library of Congress Subject Headings volumes to identify the appropriate **SUBJECT** headings to find sources relevant to your topic; **KEYWORD** is a useful search for obtaining resources on a complex topic or new concept. Keywords can be derived from titles, corporate authors, or notes in a catalogue record. Use the **LIMIT** feature to narrow or focus a search and/or to specify the material format (government documents, reference books). Subjects may also be expanded **using OR during a keyword search**. All of these searches will display the locations of the materials in the Library. You may also **consult the Reference Information Desk for help**, however, remember that you are one of many students, so try to become as independent as possible.

You might also access resources by **Subject**, through the internet. Using the Brock Library Home Page, you can access **Social Sciences, Sociology**, (<http://www.brocku.ca/library/research/socio/sochom.htm>). To see if Brock carries the periodical you want, search the Brock library catalogue using the **TITLE option and title of the journal**. The catalogue will give you the floor location of the periodical and issues the Library owns.