

Information Literacy Component	<input type="checkbox"/> Framing the Research Question	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessing Sources	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating Sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluating Content	<input type="checkbox"/> Using Information for Specific Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Understands Context and Ethics of Information Use
Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced			

Librarians at BGSU formed “Understanding Student Information-seeking Behaviors to Enhance Student Learning”, a faculty learning community through the campus [Center for Teaching and Learning](#). Members of this learning community are BGSU faculty from several disciplines across campus. Through the community we have explored ways to improve students’ abilities to contend with obstacles inherent in the research project. The community has also had opportunities to become more familiar with the University Libraries’ research tools and reflect on ways to enhance student learning. This guide pulls together readings on student research habits and recommendations from faculty about how to improve the student research experience.

The following assignment was created by one of the members of our learning community. It was reviewed by the community and established as meeting the above criteria. For additional sample assignments or information on creating effective research assignments, visit our LibGuide:

<http://libguides.bgsu.edu/studentresearch>

2011-2012 Understanding Student Information-seeking Behaviors to Enhance Student Learning

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ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS ESSAY

Task/Objective:

The analysis and synthesis essay is a focused bibliographic survey and analysis of sources for your Academic Research Project. There are two parts or sections in this assignment; part one is a bibliography of sources and part two is an essay. Part one, the bibliographic survey of sources will be organized around criteria-specific categories, and in part two, there is an in-depth critique and analysis the scholarly resources in your field/research area based on the survey. Graded A-F.

Topic Options:

Your topic/subject for this assignment is the same as your Academic Research Project subject/issue/topic.

Preparing for the Essay:

Search for sources on your topic/subject/issue using the BGSU Library search engine and databases:

- Click on LibGuide button on the left side of this course's Blackboard site; click on the Getting Started tab; read the information on this page if you are new to the BGSU library website.
- Click on the word, *Libraries*, in the orange banner along the top of this LibGuide.
- Search SUMMON for sources (SUMMON acts like a general internet browser search engine and will give you a variety of sources for results. You can refine your searches after the initial search to narrow your results)
- Search EBSCO for scholarly articles
- Search other databases that seem likely reservoirs of related source material
- Search e-journals, for specific articles dealing with your topic's field/discipline
- Keep a list of the keywords you use, in the same order that you typed them into the search boxes. Under each set of keywords, type in the database name, SUMMON, or e-journal name search engine you used for the search. Underneath each database, SUMMON, or e-journal list the limiters you may have added to refine the search. Then, list the results—only including those that relate to your topic.

Writing the Essay:

Part One: Bibliography

New projects will start fresh in this research process, looking for sources that deal in some manner with your Academic Project topic/subject/issue. Those working on current projects or revising a project will update and add to an existing set of sources already used in the project.

NOTE: your Academic Research project should be adding to the existing scholarly knowledge of your topic/subject/issue in some new way. You will need to show that your perspective, your strategy, your analysis or your approach has not received any or much significant focus in its field or discipline. To do this, you will need to find sources that show what has already been covered about your topic/subject/issue. If you are breaking new ground with your topic/subject/issue, you will need to show that the topic has not had much, if any, scholarly material published on it. So, you will need to find sources that deal with other issues concerning your topic so you can show what has already been covered and what the gaps of knowledge are for your chosen topic/subject/issue.

The total number of sources you gather for this assignment should significantly outnumber the sources you will actually use in your Academic Project. No less than 50 sources and more typically between 50 - 100 sources represent the average range of sources for this assignment. The total number of sources will vary from person to person and also will vary depending on the type of final project undertaken in this course.

When researching a topic/subject/issue, time must be spent searching various search engines and databases to find relevant sources. Keeping track of the keywords and strings of keywords and the search engines and databases used in these searches will reduce time spent finding new sources and the time spent retracing your process to find a particular source a second time (in some databases). Using synonyms for your sets of keywords, rearranging the order of keywords in any given set, and using related words in place of the initial keywords will result in more relevant sources.

As you find sources, begin to place them (as citations) into categories. The categories should not be determined by the type of source. For example, do not organize your sources under categories such as books, journal articles, websites, and so on. This type of organization of sources does not provide any impetus for a scholarly dialogue. Instead, look for categories that will aid a scholarly dialogue, such as theoretical perspectives, instructional strategies, research studies, literature reviews, and so on. Or, organize the sources according to another set of criteria-based categories that you find most relevant to your project.

Decide on and use the most appropriate headings (and subheadings, if needed) for the categories you will use to organize sources in your bibliography and arrange the source citations under each category in alpha-order. If needed, look up the guidelines for the font type, style, and placement for headings and subheadings in MLA resources and for citing each source as given in Purdue OWL.

Required:

- Between 50 and 100 sources; more than 100 sources is also acceptable.
- A significant variety of sources including a substantial and comparable percentage of books or individual chapters in anthologies, scholarly journal articles, and professional resources and a smaller percentage of dissertations, theses, published conference presentations and lectures, and trade/profession publications, such as professional magazines, newsletters, and websites..
- Each source must be correctly and accurately documented on a Bibliography page according to the most recent MLA documentation standards. If you have stated that you will be using APA as the documentation style in your Academic Project, then you may use the most recent APA documentation style for this assignment.
- The Bibliography will look like an extensive works cited page with several categories and have a running header with your last name and page numbers, except:
 - the word Bibliography will replace the words Works Cited, and
 - the citations will be in alphabetical order but underneath category headings
 - do not use numbers to list sources on the Bibliography page—list the source the same as on a works cited page

Part Two: Analysis & Synthesis Essay

The analysis and synthesis essay portion of this assignment should briefly describe your search strategies and results, should provide an analytical and synthesized review of the sources as listed within categories, and show the gap in the scholarly knowledge which your Academic Research Project will help to close.

The analysis and synthesis essay has three main parts, as in any essay: an introduction, body, and conclusion, and it will have a works cited (MLA) or references (APA) page. The content of each of these parts is described below:

INTRODUCTION: Briefly describe your search strategies and results, but do not write this as a narrative or using the first person “I,” “me,” “my,” etc. This section should answer:

- What is the topic/subject/issue?

- What was the search strategy?
- What databases were searched and why?
- What other searches were conducted?
- How many sources and what type of sources were found for each type of search?
- Were there too many or too few sources overall, or too many or too few of a certain type of source?
- **Thesis:** What did the results of the searches show in relation to the topic/subject/issue?

BODY: This part of the essay **should have subheadings based on the categories selected for your Bibliography (Part One)**. The body of this essay closely resembles a literature review; however, while you should include a significant number of sources from your bibliography in this section, you should not include every source listed on your bibliography. Only use enough sources to support your analysis of the coverage of the topic/subject/issue and to synthesize together in support of the need for your academic project. When discussing sources in this section, fully introduce the source including the author(s)' name(s) and article or book title and make sure the connection between the source and the paragraph's point is clearly explained. Cite any quoted, summarized, or paraphrased source material taken from any source, parenthetically in-text. Each source used in this essay also must be accurately and correctly cited on a works cited (MLA) or reference (APA) page at the end of the essay.

CONCLUSION: The conclusion should highlight the gap in the scholarly knowledge/scholarly discourse that the body of your essay uncovered. Again, do not write this as a narrative or using the first person "I," "me," "my," etc.. This section should answer:

- What aspects of the topic/subject/issue have already received substantial focused attention?
- What aspects of the topic/subject/issue still need further scholarly attention?
- What is the significance of your academic project? In other words, in what way will your academic project help to add to the scholarly knowledge of the topic/subject/issue?

WORKS CITED (MLA) OR REFERENCES (APA) PAGE: Each source used in this part of the assignment—the Analysis and Synthesis essay, must be correctly and accurately documented on a Works Cited or Reference page at the end of the essay, according to the most recent MLA documentation standards. If you have stated that you will be using APA as the documentation style in your Academic Project, then you may use the most recent APA documentation style for this assignment.

Required:

- A significant number sources used and cited in the essay. A general guideline is that there should be less than 50% but more than 25% of the total number of sources listed on the Bibliography used in the essay portion.
- The essay should be at least 5 - 8 pages, not counting the Works Cited page.
- The essay needs to be double-spaced using MLA (or APA) page formatting, using one-inch margins on all sides of the pages in a standard Times New Roman 12-pt. font.
- Save your document as a Microsoft Word or as a pdf file.

A NOTE OF CAUTION: Do not mix formatting or documentation styles. Carefully proofread citations, documentation, and formatting so that it is consistent with the documentation style you are using. The bibliography and essay should both be either all MLA or all APA. An accurate and correct documentation style is required of graduate students. If you have questions about citing sources and/or source material and you have not found help on the Purdue OWL or in the APA or MLA documentation style books or in any writing handbook, consider contacting the BGSU Writers Center in the Learning Commons for assistance.