

Searching the Library

The public library is a good place to start finding information about your issue. There are many great resources in the library. For you to get the most out of the library, follow these tips:

Know what you're looking for. Come prepared with your topic or issue in mind.

Ask the reference librarian to help you. Reference librarians are trained professionals who know where to find information. Seek one out before you start your research. Explain what you are looking for.

Find books on your subject, especially reference books.

When you find a helpful book in the library's catalog, it will list subject headings. Look for other books under these headings.

Search for articles in electronic indexes. Most libraries have electronic indexes for articles on a wide variety of topics from newspapers, magazines, and electronic resources (e-resources). For older articles, look in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Libraries usually carry print copies of several newspapers and many magazines.

Look for names of organizations and experts who may be able to help you. Even if you're just looking for information, write down these names for future reference. Look for Gale's *Encyclopedia of Associations*, available both in print and electronically.

Look for information from the government. The federal government publishes information on a wide range of problems and issues. U.S. congressional committees, for example, conduct hearings, take testimony, and issue reports on problems and issues facing the country. The federal government, states, and many cities put information online.

Get information while still at home. Many libraries have searchable catalogs and free research databases online. Check to see if you need a library card to use the databases. Libraries often provide telephone reference assistance, too.

