



Facts and statistics provide an important foundation for student term papers and speeches. Many fact searches are straightforward, but some are surprisingly elusive – if so, ask a librarian! Keep in mind that information for college work must come from – or be verified in – reliable sources.



RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

1. Look for a **standard reference source** that will do the job.

This guide lists some good *general* reference sources, in print or online, of the following types:

Almanacs & Factbooks	Dictionaries	Quotation Collections
Atlases & Gazetteers	Directories	Statistical Abstracts
Biographical Collections	Encyclopedias	Yearbooks
Chronologies & Timelines	Handbooks & Manuals	

2. Look for **specialized reference works** for your **subject**.

The types of reference work listed above exist for most subjects. For example:

<i>Atlas of Languages</i>	<i>American Writers</i>	<i>Law Dictionary</i>
<i>Timetables of Science</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Psychology</i>	<i>Film Quotations.</i>

To find such items...

- Browse the Reference area for your subject. (Check the *LC Classification* posters for the code.)
- Search *CougarCat*: *education and statistics* *environment and encyclop**
- Search *netLibrary*'s "Reference Center" or search all of *netLibrary* by keyword or full-text.
- Check our "Research Guide" for your subject – it will list recommended reference materials

3. Try *Google* or another good **Web search engine**. This will usually at least provide clues for continuing your quest and *may* provide the information you need. But remember: unless you are very sure of a website's credibility, you must *verify* the information in an independent, reliable source.

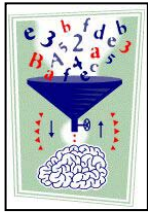
4. Stuck? Ask a librarian!

Note on free Web editions:

If a well-known reference work is freely available on the Web, check the date! Although a few publishers have made current editions of their major reference works available (paid for by advertising), such items on the Web are often out-of-copyright editions at least 70 years old. For example, you can easily find free online access to the 1913 *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* or the 1919 edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, but the current editions are under copyright and cannot be legally posted to the Web.

Some websites with extensive links to online reference resources:

Bartleby's Reference Collection	www.bartleby.com/reference/
Google's Reference Directory	directory.google.com/Top/Reference/
Infomine General Reference	infomine.ucr.edu/?view=reference
Internet Public Library Reference collection	www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/ref00.00.00
Librarians' Index to the Internet Ready-Reference	lii.org/search/file/reference



Almanacs, Statistical Abstracts & Yearbooks: bare-bones information

Government agencies (federal, state, international) are the primary source for most statistics.

<i>World Almanac</i>	AY 67 .N5 W7 (also EBSCO: <i>Acad. Srch Prem.</i>)
<i>Statistical Abstract of the United States</i>	HA 202 www.census.gov/statab/www
<i>Int'l Year Book and Statesmen's Who's Who</i>	JA 51 .I57

Some additional free resources on the Web:

<i>Information Please Almanac</i>	www.infoplease.com
<i>CIA World Factbook</i>	www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
County and City Databook	www.census.gov/statab/www/ccdb.html
FedStats Reference Shelf:	www.fedstats.gov/fast.html
FedStats Topics A-Z	www.fedstats.gov/cgi-bin/A2Z.cgi
United Nations Information	www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation3/menu/advanced.asp



Atlases (map collections) & Gazetteers (geographical dictionaries)

<i>Hammond World Atlas</i>	G 1021 .H2665 1999 (Atlas stand)
<i>Atlas of World History</i>	G 1030 .O85 1999
<i>Commercial Atlas & Marketing Guide</i>	G 1019 .R22 2003 (Atlas stand)
<i>Oregon Atlas and Gazetteer</i>	G 1490 .D4 1991
<i>Historical Atlas of the United States</i>	G 1201 .S1 N3 1988

Some free resources on the Web:

National Atlas of the United States	nationalatlas.gov
MapQuest	www.mapquest.com/maps
Columbia Gazetteer of North America	www.bartleby.com/69
National Geographic Map Machine	mapmachine.nationalgeographic.com
United Nations maps	www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm
Library of Congress historical map collection	lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html
Digital Atlas of the United States	130.166.124.2/USpage1.html



Biographical Collections

<i>Current Biography</i>	CT 100 .C8
<i>Encyclopedia of World Biography</i>	CT 103 .M27
<i>Cambridge Biographical Dictionary</i>	CT 103 .C4 1990

There are many "Who's Who" books, with brief professional biographies of notable people, including *Who's Who* (DA 28 .W6); *Who Was Who* (DA 28 .W59); *Who's Who in America*

(E 176 .W642), etc. Check the catalog for a *Who's Who* by subject (keyword search: "who's who" and music)

Some free resources on the Web:

Lives (links to Web biographies of deceased individuals)	amillionlives.com
Biography Channel (brief bios from <i>Cambridge Biographical Dictionary</i>)	www.biography.com
People Spot (people finder + biography links)	www.peoplespot.com

A simple Google search will generally turn up many websites of varying quality. (Try putting the name in quotes.)



Chronologies & Timelines

<i>The Timetables of History</i>	D11 .G78
<i>Visual Timeline of the 20th Century</i>	D 425 .D54 1996

American Eras (E 174.5 .A472) and *American Decades* (E 169.12 .A419) provide numerous timelines. Timelines can also be found in the *World Almanac* and subject encyclopedias such as *Literature and Its Times* (PN 50 .L574) and *Science and Its Times* (Q 175.46 S35).

Some free resources on the Web:

AlternaTime (links to many Web timelines)	www2.canisius.edu/~emeryg/time.html
Hyper-History online	www.hyperhistory.com/online_n2/History_n2/a.html
Smithsonian American History timeline	www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/timeline.htm
Timelines of History	timelines.ws
UCMP Web Time Machine (geologic periods)	www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/help/timeform.html



Dictionaries

English language dictionaries:	PE 1625+
Word origin / etymology dictionaries:	PE 1574+
Synonym dictionaries / thesauruses:	PE 1591
<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>	PE 1625 (also CD-ROM workstation)
MacMillan Visual Dictionary	PE 1629 .C64 1992

Some free resources on the Web:

<i>American Heritage Dictionary</i> , 2000	www.bartleby.com/br/61.html
<i>Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary</i> . 2004.	www.m-w.com
Dictionary.com	www.dictionary.com
Roget's <i>Thesaurus</i> (1922)	www.bartleby.com/110/
Roget's II (1995)	www.bartleby.com/62/



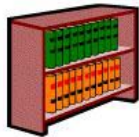
Directories

A Web search will generally do a good job of finding up-to-date contact information, but here are a few useful directories to know.

<i>Encyclopedia of Associations</i>	HS 177 .G332 2002
<i>Oregon Business Directory</i>	HF 5065 .O7 O7

Some free resources on the Web:

Switchboard	www.switchboard.com
Yahoo	www.yahoo.com try "Yellow Pages" or "People Search"



Encyclopedias (General)

Britannica, Americana, World Book, etc: AE5.

To find specialized subject encyclopedias, find the code for your subject and browse Reference.

Some free resources on the Web:

<i>Britannica Concise</i> , 2004	concise.britannica.com
<i>Columbia Encyclopedia</i> , 6 th ed., 2001-04	www.bartleby.com/65 (brief entries, but a good start)
<i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> , 11 th ed., 1911	1911encyclopedia.org
<i>Wikipedia</i>	en.wikipedia.org

A vast "open-content" collection of articles written and subsequently edited by anyone who wishes to contribute. Documentation of sources is extremely variable. A useful starting point, but information may need to be verified in independent, reputable sources.

Handbooks & Manuals Best bet is to check Reference by subject, but here are a few to know:

<i>United States Government Manual</i>	JK 421	www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual
<i>Oregon Blue Book</i>	JK 9031	bluebook.state.or.us
<i>How Things Work Today</i> (T)	T 47 .S43 2000	

Some additional free resources on the Web:

How Stuff Works	www.howstuffworks.com (lots of information, but no source citations)
<i>Merck Manual of Medical Information</i> , 2003	www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual_home2/home.jsp



Quotation Collections

<i>Familiar Quotations</i> ("Bartlett's"), 16 th ed.	PN 6081 .B27 1992
<i>They Never Said It</i>	PN 6081 .B635 1989
<i>Columbia Dictionary of Quotations</i>	PN 6081 .A52 1993

Some free resources on the Web:

Bartlett's <i>Familiar Quotations</i> , 10 th ed., 1919	www.bartleby.com/100
Creative Quotations	creativequotations.com (cites sources)
Simpson's <i>Contemporary Quotations</i> , 1988	www.bartleby.com/63

Sample quests:

1. Finding facts and statistics for a term paper:

Which states have the death penalty, and how many people have been executed in recent years?

Solution 1 – standard general reference source: *World Almanac* – it's indexed in EBSCO
Open EBSCO's *Academic Search Premier* index
On one line in the keyword screen, search for **world almanac** in the "SO journal name" field
On another line, search for **death penalty** (in the default fields).

Solution 2 – standard general reference source: *Statistical Abstracts*
Go to www.census.gov/statab/www; open the current edition
Search for **death penalty** or select the "Law Enforcement" chapter

Solution 3 – subject reference work:
Find the Library of Congress Classification code for Law: **K**
Go to the "K" shelves in Reference; you find *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*
Look up **death penalty** in the index; it tells you to look up **capital punishment**
Find the article on capital punishment; it gives a list.

Solution 4 – Web search
Search Google for **death penalty states**
This retrieves websites of anti-death penalty organizations, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.
Determine which of these you believe to be most reliable; compare the data on different sites.
If necessary, verify the information in one of the above sources.

2. "Treasure Hunt" questions:

Who is Stanley Fish?

If this person is totally unfamiliar, start with a Web search.

A *Google* search gives a list of websites that relate to

- 1) a **person** who has something to do with **literature** – this seems promising
- 2) a **company** that has something to do with railroads – ignore these, the question was "who."

One of the result sites with an ".edu" domain turns out to be an official University of Chicago page. It states that he is Professor of English and Criminal Justice there, and a Dean.

This seems like a sufficiently credible source. However, it's easy to **verify** it in another reliable source:

Solution 1: standard reference source

For a contemporary, American professor, a good bet is *Who's Who in America* (E 176 .W642)
There is an entry for him, with a list of honors and publications.

Solution 2: subject reference book

Find the Library of Congress Classification code for Literature (general): **PN**
Browse the PN shelves in Reference; you will find *Contemporary Literary Criticism*.
Check the index for "Fish, Stanley." This shows an extensive article on him in volume 142.
The article verifies his position at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and states that he is a literary theorist who "explored the role of the reader in determining the meaning of a text."