Questions for Evaluating a Research Proposal

We observed above that a key purpose of a research proposal is to convince the reader that the researcher can complete a solid piece of research on an important topic. When you evaluate a research proposal you should consider the following questions and issues:

- Does the proposal explain the problem or issue sufficiently to make it interesting and worthy of a reader’s time? Why or why not? Is there anything in the introductory section of the proposal that ought to be explained in more detail?

- Do you understand the research question? In other words, can you explain what the research will attempt to do or prove? Is there a clear statement of this? If so, identify it. If not, say so.

- Does the author appear to have identified the major studies previously done on the topic? Has he or she identified those studies’ contributions and shortcomings? (The proposed research should build on the contributions and/or correct one or more of the shortcomings.)

- Do you understand clearly and exactly what the author intends to do and complete this research? Are there any details missing from the description? If so, what are they? Has the author identified a reasonable data set with which to test his or her hypothesis? Has he or she adequately explained his or her testing methodology?

- Are there enough sources to write a convincing paper?

- In sum, what do you see as the proposal’s strengths, and what do you see as its weaknesses?

Your commentary should conclude with an explicit statement about whether the proposal is acceptable as is or not. If it is not, you should provide specific guidelines for what needs to be done to make the proposal acceptable. Again, remember that your feedback should be supportive but honest.

Surveying the Literature on a Topic in Economics

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

SIR ISAAC NEWTON

Further we noted that scholars engage in a kind of conversation or dialog of competing arguments as they attempt to increase humankind’s knowledge about a topic. This conversation manifests itself as published research, which is described as “the literature” on the subject. When you survey the literature on a subject, you are trying to identify the major studies that have been published to date. But more importantly, you are trying to understand what the studies say and how they relate to one another. We will explain how to read and understand scholarly publications in Chapter 6. In this chapter we will explain why and how researchers perform a literature survey as a key component of the research process. In Chapter 12, we will explain how to write a literature survey as part of a research paper.

**Why Is a Literature Survey Necessary?**

Ehriiche (1995, 115) observed that before you can “advance the state of knowledge,” you need to know what the state of knowledge is. So when you survey the literature, you are trying to create your own sense of what is known and what is not known about the subject. This is important for several reasons. Early in the research process you can get ideas for possible angles for your research. Later in the process you can show how your research fits into and contributes to the larger conversation on the subject. This serves to establish your credentials as a researcher by showing readers that you are knowledgeable about the field.
There are several additional reasons for surveying the literature. One is to avoid duplicating findings that have already been obtained. In this fashion you can use someone else’s prior work as a steppingstone for yours. For example, Ethridge (1995) points out that the literature can help you design your own study by showing how previous approaches either were or were not successful. Similarly, previous studies can suggest ways you might handle problems you run into.

Those new to research sometimes focus their literature survey too narrowly. The literature review should not be limited to searching for previous studies on your topic. It should also examine studies of other topics that use conceptual frameworks or testing methodologies that might be applicable to your topic. For example, in a research project on the demand for blood, it could be useful to examine previous demand studies on related products, such as the demand for transplant organs or even on other commodities entirely.

**Where to Search: Popular versus Scholarly Literature**

Information on a topic can be found in two types of publications: popular and scholarly publications. Scholarly publications are also referred to as scientific or professional publications. What is the difference between popular and scholarly publications? Popular publications are addressed to a general audience, while scholarly ones are addressed to a specialized audience, namely, experts in the field. Scholarly publications are often primary sources of information, while popular publications are almost always secondary sources. A primary source of information is the original publication of a research study, written by an expert and addressed to other scholars in the field. One example would be an article in the *American Economic Review* (AER, a scholarly journal) that explains a new study conducted by the authors of the article on the effects of preschool education on poverty rates. A secondary source is a report based on the primary source, typically addressed to a more general audience. An article in *Time* magazine summarizing the article in the *American Economic Review* would be an example of a secondary source in a popular publication.

One popular publication that undergraduates sometimes mistake for a scholarly journal is the *Economist*. This magazine publishes a regular column entitled “Economics Focus” that does an excellent job of summarizing recent research in language that the educated lay public can understand. In addition, unlike most popular publications, the *Economist* often provides references to the scholarly articles in which the research reports on was published. Nonetheless, the *Economist* is a popular rather than a scholarly journal.

To begin the literature survey process, it makes sense to consult popular sources because they will give you information on what is generally known about a topic. In addition, since they are addressed to general audiences they are easy to read and assimilate. Popular sources include encyclopedias; news magazines, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Business Week*; and newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. Note that these popular publications are increasingly available online, often for free. For example, the most recent two weeks of the *Washington Post* are available at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

Internet resources such as directories and search engines are also popular sources of general information. Most undergraduates are familiar with these tools, so we will only discuss them briefly here. Directories are hierarchically organized catalogs on a variety of subjects. Well-known examples include [http://www.galaxy.com](http://www.galaxy.com), [http://www.looksmart.com](http://www.looksmart.com), and [http://www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). Virtual libraries are directories that have been compiled by librarians and other experts. As a result, they tend to include somewhat better resources than ordinary directories. Examples include the WWW Virtual Library ([http://www.vlib.org](http://www.vlib.org)) and the Internet Public Library ([http://www.ipl.org](http://www.ipl.org)). Each of these has sections on economics that can provide helpful background information.

Another Internet tool is the search engine. Search engines are computer programs that create databases of websites catalogued by topic. Users can perform keyword searches on those databases to obtain information from the websites dealing with their subjects of interest. Popular search engines include [http://www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [http://www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com), and [http://www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com). A particularly useful search engine is MetaCrawler at [http://www.go2net.com](http://www.go2net.com). Instead of searching its own database, MetaCrawler searches the results of several major search engines, including Google, Yahoo, Ask Jeeves, About, LookSmart, and others.

The shortcoming of most general-interest directories and search engines is that they contain a great deal of information that is not useful for scholarly research. This is especially problematic for novice researchers who may have difficulty differentiating between authoritative and nonauthoritative sources. We will discuss some ways in which these tools may be productively used later in this chapter.

Although it makes sense to begin reviewing the literature by consulting popular sources, it is important to realize that the conversation between experts in the field that creates knowledge occurs only in the scholarly literature. These professional publications have undergone a peer review or refereed review process prior to publication. This review conveys at least a certain degree of validity to these studies. Scientific publications include articles
in professional journals, scholarly books, monographs, working papers, and some government documents. Monographs are short books, typically no more than one hundred pages, on a single (hence "monograph") scholarly topic. Working papers are scholarly articles in progress—prior to final publication. Table 3.1 gives examples of scholarly economics journals published in the United States.

Many professional journals are difficult for undergraduates to understand, and as we noted earlier, Chapter 6 will explain how to decipher them. You should be aware that some journals are more readable than others. For example, each regional Federal Reserve Bank publishes an Economic Review. Publications of the Congressional Budget Office are also quite good. In addition, publications of the various think tanks such as the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, the Economic Policy Institute, and the Cato Institute are more accessible. However, it is important to remember that think tanks are in business to promote their particular point of view. Thus, one should read think tank publications more carefully and critically than more objective sources.

**How to Search: Developing an Effective Search Strategy**

To locate information efficiently, one needs to use a search strategy. This section will explain how to develop one by using a sample research question: "To what extent was the 2001 U.S. economic slowdown caused by the decline in the stock market?"
Table 3.3 Expanded AEA Subject Descriptors for A—General Economics and Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A00 — General</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 — General Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>A10 — General</td>
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<tr>
<td>A11 — Role of Economics</td>
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<td>A12 — Relation of Economics to Other Disciplines</td>
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<tr>
<td>A13 — Relation of Economics to Social Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>A14 — Sociology of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19 — Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 — Teaching of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A20 — General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A21 — Pre-college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A22 — Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A23 — Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A29 — Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these general headings can be further expanded, as illustrated in Table 3.3 for the category “A—General Economics and Teaching.” The complete classification system can be reviewed at https://www.aeaweb.org/journal/elaclsj.html. By knowing this classification system, you may be able to find useful information on a research topic more easily.

There are two journals you should be particularly aware of as you begin your research. The Journal of Economic Perspectives (JEP) is designed as a general-interest journal for economists. As such, the majority of articles published are summaries of current thinking by economists on a given topic. Similarly, the Journal of Economic Literature (JEL) primarily publishes survey articles of the literature on specific topics in economics. The American Economic Association publishes both journals, and their tables of contents for the past several years are available at the AEA website (http://www.aeaweb.org/jep/contents and http://www.aeaweb.org/journal/contents).

If you can find an article on your research topic in either of these journals, you will be ahead of the game since they will already have a certain sense of the major studies on the publication date of the article. You will still need to look for more recent studies, however.

More generally, when you locate a useful journal article, you should consider the sources it references as obvious targets for your review. Be sure to remember that you are not just building your own research but also may be building on someone else’s.

Keyword Searching

The alternative way to locate information is by performing a keyword search. Keyword searches use search engines on the World Wide Web or on specialized databases. These latter include bibliographic databases, such as EconLit (formerly the Economics Literature Index), which consist of citations and abstracts only, as well as full-text databases, such as Dow Jones Interactive, which contain entire documents. Access to specialized databases is provided by a number of commercial vendors, such as OCLC FirstSearch or DIALOG. Researchers can often access to many of these databases through their university library or computer network.

Keyword searching allows you to examine far more documents than would be feasible by browsing, even assuming you knew about them. The major web search engines claim to index all the documents on the Internet, while search engines in electronic databases index all the documents in the database. For example, EconLit currently indexes more than six hundred economics journals, seventeen hundred new books, and nine hundred new dissertations per year—for nearly a complete record of all English-language publications in economics since 1969. As such, EconLit should be one of the first places you start searching when researching in economics.

One exceptional tool for keyword searching is the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). The SSCI allows you to search for citations both backward and forward in time. In our earlier discussion of browsing, we noted that when you find a useful publication, say DeLong (2001), it makes sense to review
Do Not Limit Your Search to Full-Text Databases!

Undergraduates sometimes view the literature search as nothing more than a hurdle on the way to completing a research project. (This is not unusual, in fact, as we have tried to explain, discovering what other researchers have done in the field can be a major help in completing your own research.) As a consequence, such students may limit their search to full-text databases. After all, they reason, even if you find something in a bibliographic database, it's still possible it would be difficult or impossible to acquire. This is poor judgment! The goal of a literature search is to find the most important studies done on a topic, not merely the easiest ones to obtain. Put another way, if there is a major study that you fail to find because it was not cataloged on a full-text database, your research will have a substantial flaw. Nearly all college and university libraries subscribe to the major economics journals. This means articles from those journals are available in printed form, microfiche, or film at your library. Even if your library does not subscribe to a journal that you need, it's possible that one of your faculty members does. It never hurts to ask. Limiting yourself to full-text databases will also virtually rule out any books as sources. Finally, it is hard to imagine a reference that you could not obtain through interlibrary loan. In short, don't limit yourself to full-text databases! It's a false economy—it will cost you in the end more than it's worth.

The earlier studies that it cites, SSCI can do this for you electronically, since for every journal article or book it catalogues, it also indexes the publication's citations. Doing this electronically can be a bit faster than reading study's bibliography, but the real advantage of SSCI is in doing forward searches. That is, the SSCI database also indexes all the publications that cite DeLoach (2001) in their reference lists. As a result, it is very easy to get a complete list of the major studies done on a topic. An additional advantage of the SSCI is that it is interdisciplinary; it covers a variety of social science fields. What this means is that you are less likely to miss a study done on your topic but in a field other than economics, as could occur if you only searched EconLit. The main disadvantage of the SSCI is that it is quite expensive, so many colleges and universities do not subscribe to it. If your institution has it, you should use it.

Though your scholarly literature survey should concentrate on using specialized databases to find literature, web search engines can also be profitability employed. The best web search engine for academic uses is probably Google (http://www.google.com). A criticism of Web-based research is that the majority of what is on the Web is not scholarly in nature. One advantage of Google is that in addition to indexing webpages, it also catalogs a number of other file types, including Adobe document (.pdf) files, Word and WordPerfect documents, Excel and Lotus 123 spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, and others. As a result, a researcher could use Google to find scholarly working papers or data sets on researchers' personal webpages, even before they are published.

The principal disadvantage of keyword searches, when using specialized directories or web search engines, is that they may generate many "hits," but only a few useful ones. Imagine doing an electronic search using the phrase stock market. Depending on the database, you could get hundreds or even thousands of results. Even if there are many relevant hits, you will need a good deal of time and effort to separate the wheat from the chaff. Consider the way commercial fishermen use a dragnet. The net scoops up everything in the water for several miles around. Then even though the fishermen only want codfish, they need to examine and throw away everything else they catch.

The solution to this quandary is to perform a more advanced keyword search using a combination of Boolean and phrase searching. Boolean searching allows you to focus the search in the way most likely to obtain useful results. There are three Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT. AND is used to narrow a search. For example, a search on the keywords Keynesian AND Post would locate only those items including both keywords, such as "Post Keynesian." OR is used to widen a search. A search on the keywords Monetarist OR Keynesian would locate those items including either keyword. NOT means exclude. It includes all items except those that contain the NOT keyword. For example, a search on the keywords Keynesian NOT Post would identify all items with "Keynesian," except those with "Post Keynesian."

You can also fine-tune your search using nested Boolean logic. For example, a search on the keywords Monetarist OR Keynesian NOT Post) would locate all items including either "Monetarist" or "Keynesian," except those with "Post Keynesian."
Phrase searching looks for the items that contain an exact phrase that you specify within quotes. For example, a search on "Post Keynesian" would locate only those items with that exact phrase, but it would exclude items that include those two keywords separately. A wildcard character can allow you to search more efficiently by truncating your search phrase. If the wildcard character for a search engine is *, then searching on the keyword * Keynesian* would locate items containing "Keynesian" or "Keynesian* or "Keynesian*es." Similarly, a search on the keyword women* would yield items containing "woman*" or "women.* "

**A Basic Search Strategy**

Ackerman and Hartman (1998) propose a basic search strategy, which is shown (in a revised form) in Table 3.4. Through the table gives the impression that this is a straightforward process, in practice it is a great deal more uncertain. For one thing, at the beginning of the process the researcher may not know exactly what to look for. This is especially true for a researcher new to the topic. For another, the process is iterative. You will never find every thing in a single search. Rather, you will need to try an initial set of keywords with one database. Once you find a few good sources, read them. As you become more familiar with the literature, other ideas for keywords will come to mind, which you can then search with. If one database is unsuccessful, try another. If one subject approach doesn't yield enough, try a related field. There is an art to keyword searching, and some researchers are better at it than others. Fortunately, anyone can become better with practice.

**Sample Keyword Search**

Let's perform a keyword search on our sample research topic using the search strategy outlined in Table 3.4.

1. Recall that the research topic is the extent to which the 2001 economic slowdown was caused by a decline in the stock market.
2. The research topic can suggest the important concepts to begin with. These could include **stock market decline** and **economic slowdown**.
3. A little brainstorming about possible connections between the two can suggest other keywords to search for: **household wealth**, **consumer spending**, and **life-cycle model**. Note also that in choosing keywords, one can select the JEL subject classification for one's topic. In this case, we could choose C100 for "General Financial Markets" or E200 for "Macroeconomics: Consumption, Saving, Production, Employment, and Investment, General."
4. Synonyms for **stock market decline** could be **crash** or **correction** or **bear market**. A synonym for **economic slowdown** could be **recession**. Synonyms for **wealth** could be **savings** or **savings**. Synonyms for **consumer spending** could be **consumer expenditure** or **consumption**.
5. The research topic suggests two fields whose literature might prove useful: economics and business.
6. For multiple-word expressions we will need to use phrase searching, for example, **"consumer spending"**. For synonyms we will need to use Boolean operators, for example, **"consumer spending"** OR **"consumer expenditure"** OR **"consumption"**. For relationships we will need to use the Boolean AND operator, for example, **"consumption AND wealth"**.
7. When performing economics research, a good database to begin with is EconLit. For other fields, the following might be helpful:
   - **Expanded Academic ASAP** -- for business academic journals,
   - **Wilson Business Abstracts** -- for business academic journals,
   - **Business & Company Resource Center** -- for business information at the company level,
   - **ERIC** -- for education,
   - **PAIS** -- for public affairs and international studies,
   - **Dow Jones Interactive** -- for current topics not yet in the scholarly literature, also business academic journals,
   - **SSCI** -- for any of the social sciences.
Be aware that the user interface and the format in which search results are provided can differ depending on which vendor supplies your access to the database.


9. An initial keyword search was performed using the expression "consumption AND stock market."

10. This search yielded 1,422 hits, which is too many to review meaningfully.

11. A revised search using the expression "consumer spending OR stock market" yielded 97 hits, including a promising article by Shivani & Wilbricht (2000) "Does Consumption Respond More Strongly to Stock Market Declines than to Increases?" A subsequent search using the expression "consumer spending (OR "consumption") AND recession" resulted in 76 hits, including another good one, Blanchard (1999) "Consumption and the Recession of 1990-91." Another search using the expression "stock market (OR "stock") AND recession" yielded 13 hits of which three looked useful.

12. Let’s try searching another database: Expanded Academic ASAP. A search using the expression "consumer spending (OR "consumption") AND recession" yielded 22 hits, of which several appear interesting. One of these was Blanchard (1993), which we found previously.

You should try all the search expressions that generated good results (i.e., not too many hits, and many of them useful) on each of the databases searched. At some point, you will begin to turn up the same sources, such as Blanchard (1985). This is a sign that you’ve near the end of effective searching. Notice that our keyword searches did not turn up the Poter (2000) paper we discovered earlier by browsing. That is why both types of searches are necessary. After completing the browsing and keyword searches, and examining the references cited by the studies found thereby, we can conclude that we have found the major published studies to date on our research question.

Obtaining the Resources

Once you have identified potential sources, you need to obtain them. The World Wide Web has revolutionized access to research materials, especially for scholars at smaller institutions whose libraries may have limited collections. More and more resources are available online, including full-text books and journal articles.

More than a hundred economics journals are available free in full-text format. One list of such journals is available at the Resources for Economists page at http://repec. Another list is maintained at the College of Wooster (http://www.wooster.edu/economics/archive/journals.html).

There are also a number of proprietary portals to full-text journals. For example, the American Economic Association hosts a web portal (http://www.aeaweb.org) that includes full-text access to all the past three years of the journals it publishes: the AER, JAE, and JEP. Access to the journals’ tables of contents and abstracts is available to anyone, but full-text access requires AEA membership. The site also includes Bill Goette’s Resources for Economists on the Internet, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. JSTOR is an archive of full-text scholarly journals, including (as of this writing) twenty-four top journals in economics, which are listed in Table 3.5.

Many colleges and universities subscribe to JSTOR. AEA members can access JSTOR via a modest annual fee ($10). There are several other proprietary online databases that offer full-text journal articles. One of these is Expanded Academic ASAP, which includes the full text of many economics journals that are not included in JSTOR.

In addition to the obvious speed and convenience that online access to journal articles provides, in the near future we will be able to link directly to references cited in those articles (backward linking). It may even be possible to link to articles citing those articles (forward linking).

Government documents are also increasingly available online. In the past decade the U.S. government has made a significant effort...
to make virtually all print documents accessible online. Moreover, unlike their printed counterparts, they are obtainable for free. A good place to begin searching for government publications is at www.fdsys.gov.

The first place to look for books is still your college or university library. To date, the availability of books online is lagging behind the availability of journal articles and government documents. One very promising source for electronic books, however, is NetLibrary (www.netlibrary.com), a subsidiary of OCLC, which offers electronic texts on a subscription basis to libraries. As of this writing, NetLibrary has over fifty-four thousand titles in a variety of fields including economics. Just as you would search for a printed book, you use your college or university library's search engine to find an online text. Indeed, until you find the entry, you won't know whether the book is a hard copy or an electronic one. Once you locate the electronic copy, you can "check it out" just as you would a printed copy. Unless your library subscribes to more than one copy of the e-book, no one else from your institution has access to the book until you relinquish it. An additional benefit is that you can obtain the text twenty-four hours a day without having to physically go to the library to pick it up.

We noted earlier that libraries at smaller institutions may have only limited collections. There are several ways to get around this, such as making use of interlibrary loan services or visiting nearby research university libraries. For example, it is increasingly possible to search such library catalogs remotely to ensure that their collection has what you are looking for before visiting the library.

There are also literally tens of thousands of economics working papers available online from the National Bureau of Economic Research (www.nber.org), the Social Science Research Network (papers.ssrn.com), the Working Papers Archive at Washington University in St. Louis (econpapers.wustl.edu), and NetEc (netec.wustl.edu/NetEc.html).

SUMMARY

- In order to perform original research, one needs to determine what is currently known on a topic. Thus, at the beginning of any research project the researcher needs to survey the literature.
- There are two sources of information on a topic: popular and scholarly. Only the latter is considered part of the literature.
- An effective search strategy includes the following steps:
  - Start with secondary sources in the general topic area.
  - Search for survey articles on the topic, for example, in JEP or JR.
  - Move to primary sources for example, Economists or Social Science Citation Index
  - Use a combination of keyword searching and browsing from the references of the useful sources you've located.

NOTES

1. Appendix 10 of Wryick (1994) provides an extensive listing of economics journals grouped by subject area.
2. Note also that working papers tend to be more readable than published articles because they usually include many more details of the arguments—details that are eliminated during the editorial process.
3. This is also referred to as the EconLit or "Journal of Economic Literature" classification system.
4. For example, you can do online searches using these classifications as keywords.
5. The AEA web site lists the tables of contents for the Journal of Economic Literature back to December 1994 and for the Journal of Economic Perspectives back to the beginning of 1998. One can easily get the contents from earlier issues of the journals by searching EconLit, using the journal name as the "Source" keyword.
6. Note also that you should always use multiple web search engines since they use different search criteria and their databases, while overlapping, are not identical.
7. In my courses, such a flaw would cost at least a letter grade on the final paper.
8. Note that databases like EconLit are available through more than one interface. For example, at my institution, we get it from OCLC FirstSearch, a database service provider that provides access to forty-four databases on a wide variety of subjects.
9. Note, however, that articles do not become available through JSTOR until five years after original publication.
10. Note that Tintinab's Chapter 8 was published before the 1999 MLA decision to recommend parenthetical references.
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Adornson and Hartman (1998)—Excellent, user-friendly guide to online searches and the Internet as a research tool.

Tomlin (1996)—Definitive guide to writing and citation styles for research papers and theses. See also Appendix 3A.

EXERCISES

1. Select a research question, preferably one you are actually researching. Write down the research question. Review the tables of contents for the Journal of Economic Perspectives and the Journal of Economic Literature (provided at https://www.aeaweb.org/jep/contents and http://www.aeaweb.org/journal/contents). Browse those tables of contents for one or more survey articles that are relevant to your research question. You should identify at least one article that is relevant to your research. Write down the complete bibliographic citation information for the survey articles you discover, using the citation style your instructor favors. (See Appendix 3A for information on citation styles.)

2. Select a research question, preferably one you are actually researching. Write down the research question. Use the basic search strategy illustrated in Table 3.4 to perform a keyword search in EconLit. Write down a list of "important concepts" that are relevant to your research question. Select and write down appropriate keywords. Create a search expression, and execute the search. Modify the search as necessary to find at least five useful "hits" for your research. Write down the complete bibliographic citation information for the studies you discover, using the citation style your instructor favors.

3. Select a research question, preferably one you are actually researching. Write down the research question. Use the basic search strategy illustrated in Table 3.4 to perform a keyword search using a database other than EconLit. Write down a list of "important concepts" relevant to your research question. Select and write down appropriate keywords. Create a search expression, and execute the search. Modify the search as necessary to find at least five useful "hits" for your research. Write down the complete bibliographic citation information for the studies you discover, using the citation style your instructor favors.

4. Select a research question, preferably one you are actually researching. Write down the research question. Use the basic search strategy illustrated in Table 3.4 to perform a keyword search using a web search engine like Google. Write down a list of "important concepts" relevant to your research question. Select and write down appropriate keywords. Create a search expression, and execute the search. Modify the search as necessary to find at least five useful "hits" for your research. Write down the complete bibliographic citation information for the studies you discover, using the citation style your instructor favors.
Scholarly References and Citation Styles

An essential part of reviewing literature is keeping careful references for each scholarly work you use. The purpose of citation styles is to provide a standardized, concise way of doing this. References are important for two reasons: first, to give credit to previous authors for their ideas, their intellectual property, and, second, to help readers track down those ideas in full detail. We will expand on these reasons later in Chapters 5 and 6. Here we introduce the styles.

There are three general styles for citations and references: they are known as MLA, the Chicago Style, and APA. Each of these styles explains its preferred way to write scholarly notes in the text (e.g., footnotes or endnotes) and scholarly references at the end of the text. All three styles may recommend using the parenthetical form for references—for example, "Turabian (1996)—instead of citing references in the text through footnotes or endnotes. Of course, for scholarly notes that elaborate on the text, it is still appropriate to use footnotes or endnotes.

An excellent guide to the MLA and Chicago styles is Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations, Sixth Edition* (1996). Ms. Turabian was the graduate secretary at the University of Chicago; she was responsible for accepting all theses and dissertations submitted at that institution and as such was the acknowledged expert on the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Thus, her book is essentially a condensed version of the *Chicago Manual*. Two chapters that are particularly useful are Chapter 11, which shows a comparison of the two citation styles, and Chapter 14, which illustrates the two styles in a large number of sample notes and references. Note that this edition of *Turabian* is based on the Fourteenth Edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, rather than the most recent edition. The major changes in the new edition have to do with online resources, which were not covered in the Fourteenth Edition. *Turabian* is still useful. Hopefully, a new edition of *Turabian* will be forthcoming. The following paragraphs introduce the three styles and refer to various guides to each.

MLA is the acronym for the Modern Language Association and is a style favored by scholars in the humanities disciplines. This style is spelled out in Chapter 8 (on footnotes) and Chapter 9 (on bibliographies).