GooWi Explorers

Conducting Research

Searching for Online Information using Keywords

In order to search effectively for information on a topic, you first need to decide what exactly you are searching for. You can then make a list of keywords and combinations of keywords that you can use for online searches. For example, instead of typing the word "buffalo" into an online search engine like Google, you should decide what you want to know about buffalo. You might search for "buffalo range", "buffalo cultural significance", or "buffalo ecology" to narrow your search. Keep track of what you have searched for.

Dealing with Conflicting Information

Don't forget that anyone can publish anything on the web. Just because something is online or in a book or report does not mean that it is correct. Also, scientists and scholars are constantly making discoveries and updating information on various topics. While some of the information you find on the web or in the library is current, other information may be very out of date.

This means that sometimes you find conflicting information about a topic. How do you know which is correct? Well, you may not be able to tell for sure but there are some things you should look for. These include *sources* (who published the information and what sources are it based on?) and *publication date* (when was the web page last updated? When was the book or report published?). Try to find the most recent, well-supported information possible. And always be suspicious of unsupported claims, subjective language (writing that expresses opinion rather than fact), or anyone trying to sell you something!

Citing your Sources

It is also very important to keep track of where you get your information and referencing your source. There are specific ways to "cite" articles, book chapters, and web pages. You can look these up on the Owl through your wiki. Remember, if you don't cite your source you are presenting someone else's work as your own. This is the same as stealing.

Collecting your own Data

In some projects you may collect your own data. These data could include field observations, photographs, videos, opinion surveys, interviews with people, or other information. Always be sure to write down *who* collected the information, *when* they collected it, *where* it was collected, and *whom* it was collected from (if applicable). Keep a good record of this information and be ready to let others look at it if they want to know more about how you used or interpreted your data.