3 Exploring Your Topic

A. Reference Sources

Reference Sources (e-books and print) include handbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, directories, and other specialized sources of information. Using reference books is an excellent first step in your research because they help you:

• Get a brief overview of your topic.
• Discover concepts and vocabulary related to your topic.
• Identify potential research questions or ways to narrow your topic.
• Locate facts, statistics, and bibliographies (lists of related sources).

In McPherson Library, the print reference sources are shelved together in the Reference section on the main floor near the Library Help desk. E-book reference sources are accessible through the library webpage (www.uvic.ca/library).

For this portion of the workbook you will be exploring Reference e-books to get a preliminary overview of your topic.

Your turn

➢ Go to the UVic Libraries website → http://www.uvic.ca/library
➢ Select Research Help
➢ Select Subject Guides
➢ Select Engineering
➢ Select Find Books

B. Online Reference Sources: Scholarly Encyclopedias

Instructions

Some academically acceptable reference sources frequently used by UVic students and faculty are available in electronic versions through the library’s website.

Your Turn

➢ Select the link for ScienceDirect (Elsevier). You may be prompted to enter your netlink ID or click ‘Connect to the database’.
➢ Click on Advanced Search.
➢ Select Reference Works.
➢ Search for a concept related to your topic. You should get a list of results.

➢ Notice that your results are taken from a number of encyclopedias. For example, a search for “remotely operated vehicles” found many results and the first was from *Encyclopedia of Ocean Sciences*.

➢ While reading through the entry, look for new information on your topic which you did not know about before and think of ways to modify your research question.

➢ Notice the *Cross References* at the end of the article which provide links to related entries.

➢ Look at the bibliographies at the end of the entries for additional sources of information.

➢ Record information about your search term.
C. Knovel

Instructions

Knovel provides full-text access to an online collection of over 800 science and engineering reference books as well as interactive graphs, and mathematical tables.

SOURCE 1

• I searched for the term: ______________________________________

• The specific ScienceDirect reference work most helpful was: ________________________________

• The reference work entry contains (check all that apply):
  □ A lengthy article or entry on my topic
  □ A brief mention of my topic
  □ Little or no information on my topic

• If you located useful information on your topic, can you determine who wrote or edited the entry or article?
  ________________________________________________________________

• Can you determine when the entry was edited or written?
  Year: ________
Go to the UVic Libraries website
→ http://www.uvic.ca/library
Select Research Help
Select Subject Guides
Select Engineering
Select Find Books
Select Knovel
Search for a concept related to your topic.
Your results are taken from a number of different books.
Notice that you can search within titles or results.
SOURCE 2

- I searched for the term: ________________________________
- The specific Knovel reference book most helpful was: ________________________________
- The reference book entry contains (check all that apply):
  - A lengthy article or entry on my topic
  - A brief mention of my topic
  - Little or no information on my topic
- If you located useful information on your topic, can you determine who wrote or edited the entry or book?
  ________________________________
- Can you determine when the entry or book was edited or written?
  Year: ________