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Pathfinder: United States History Project

Introduction It is often hard to know where to begin your research for a history paper or project. We hope that this Pathfinder will make it easier for you to obtain the information you need for a good paper or project. It is important that you have your assignment sheet with you as you go through these steps so that you do not overlook anything important. Before you start looking for books and taking notes, you should think about:

Citations All projects and papers require you to list the sources of your information in a **Bibliography** and to give credit for quotes, statistics, images, and ideas from other people in **Footnotes**. Your assignment sheet probably gives the expected format for these. If it does not, several good sources showing how to set up your bibliography and footnotes are:

A Guide to MLA Documentation by Trimmer (808.02/T831)

A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations by Turabian (808.02/T92)

MLA Style Manual by Gibaldi (808.027/G437/Ref)

Step 1 Check the **non-circulating Reference Books** in the library to get a **General Idea** of what is available on your topic. Some of the books you might look at are:

American Facts and Dates (Ref. 972)

Chronicles of America (Ref. 973/C557D)

Dictionary of American Biography (Ref. 920.03 Dictionary)

Encyclopedia of American Studies (Ref 973/E56A)

New York Public Library's American History Desk Reference (Ref.973/N532)

Oxford Companion to U.S. History (Ref. 973/O78)

Reader's Companion to American History (Ref.973)

Also check the **non-circulating Reference Books** by **Specific Topic** for example:
Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America (Ref. 973.3)
Encyclopedia of the United States in the 19th Century (Ref. 973.3/E561)
America in the 20th Century (Ref. 973.9/A512)
The 60s in America (Ref. 973.93/S625)

Step 2 Find out what **circulating books** on your topic are owned by the **Morse Institute Library** by:

A. Searching the catalog by:

Subject
Keyword
Title of a book
Author

B. Copy down the title, author, and Dewey Decimal number of books(s) you are interested in and go to the shelves.

C. Look through each book's table of contents and index to see what might be helpful.

Step 3 Check the **Minuteman Library Network catalog** and choose "All Locations Collection" from the pull-down menu to see what other libraries have books on your topic. You can request a book on-line from the library or from home if you have set up a PIN number with the library. If you haven't set a PIN number, you can fill out a request slip at the library for the book you want and the librarians will put in the request for you.

Step 4 If you need **Periodicals** for your report:

- A. Go to the **Morse Institute Library Catalog** page and click on "Databases and Internet Websites". Then select either "In-Library" or "Home Access" depending where you are.
- B. You can use several databases to search for articles:
General Reference Center
Expanded Academic
Infotrac Student Edition
- C. It is helpful to check "full text" before you enter the keywords for your search. By doing so, you'll retrieve the whole article instead of an abstract summary.
- D. Other resources available to you are the "Historic Boston Globe" and "Historic New York Times." "Historic Boston Globe" is only available in the library. Combined, these two databases contain full articles and pictures for each newspaper from the late 19th century up until 2001. A librarian will help you use these resources.
- E. The Morse Institute Library and other libraries in the Minuteman Library Network have many periodicals that might help you such as *American Heritage*, *Smithsonian*, *American History Illustrated*. Ask a librarian to help you search for and request these.

Step 5 Many history assignments require the use of **Primary Sources** (documents written at the time of the event.) Use the library catalog to search for these using such key words as: “your topic and primary sources” or “your topic and documents.” Some examples of collections of primary sources are listed below:

A. In the Natick library

Greenwood Press Daily Life Through History Series

Annals of America (Ref. 973)

Greenwood Press Guides to Historic Events of the 20th Century

Greenwood History of Modern Nations

Documents of American History by Henry Steele Commanger (Ref. 973/Ref)

B. On the Web

American Memory Project from the Library of Congress

<http://rs6.loc.gov/amhome.html>

American Political History on Line

<http://tigger.uic.edu/~rjensen/pol-gl.htm>

Common-Place

<http://common-place.com>

Google and Google Images

<http://www.google.com>

Historic Documents of the United States

<http://ahp.gatech.edu/hisdocs.html>

Historic Documents of the United States

<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist>

Internet Modern History Sourcebook

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

The History Project (Images of American History)

<http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/imageapp.php?Collection2=US>

Step 6 Historical Atlases

Atlas of American History by Kenneth Jackson (911/Ref)

Atlas of Westward Expansion by Alan Wexler (911/W545)

Mapping America's Past by Mark C. Carnes (911/C289/Ref)

Step 7 Timelines Timelines are helpful in understanding the causes and effects of events. Many assignments require that you submit a time line with your paper. Some useful timelines may be found in:

The American Story: what, when, where, why of our nation's history (973/A512Re)

The Bicentennial Almanac: 200 Years of America 1776-1976 (973/B58)

United States History

Timelines of the 20th Century (909.82/B885/Ref)

From Elvis to e-mail (973.92/D553)

To find other timelines, enter the words Europe-History-Chronology or Chronology, Historical as a search string using **Keyword** in the **Minuteman Library Network Catalog** (www.min.lib.ma.us)