

Selecting a Topic for Your Research Paper

The first thing to do when looking for a research topic is to find a subject area that interests **you**. After all, you will be spending several hours researching and writing your paper, so you don't want to be bored with your topic before you even start! Make sure to select a topic that is not too broad, but one that still has enough information on it to write a complete paper. With that in mind, here are some sources to help you find a topic to write on.

Controversial Issues Databases

Consult one of the PC Library controversial issues databases (PC Library > Articles > Controversial Issues) to read brief overviews of controversial topics. If your instructor asks you to write about a topic where you need to support one argument over another (i.e. pro vs. con), these databases can be extremely helpful in identifying a topic for your research paper.

[CQ Researcher](#)

Click on or to view pro/con sections by topic. Topics include social issues in areas such as the environment, health, education, and science and technology.

[Issues and Controversies @facts.com](#)

Select headings under to browse more than 250 controversial topics. Under select headings for one sentence summaries of different viewpoints on an issue. Includes, illustrations, maps, tables, and bibliographies.

[Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center](#)

Search for a specific topic or browse the list of popular topics. Focuses on social issues such as censorship, endangered species, genetic engineering, gun control, and terrorism. It includes viewpoint articles, contextual topic overviews, government and organizational statistics, biographies of social activists, court cases, profiles of government agencies and special interest groups, newspaper and magazine articles, as well as links to more than 1,800 reviewed web sites.

Off-Campus Access: These controversial issues databases are accessible from off-campus by PC students, faculty, and staff. To access these restricted databases, you will need:

- Your MEID – Found underneath the barcode on the back of your Cub Card (Student ID card).
- PIN – The last four digits of your telephone number.
- If you are enrolled in online classes using Blackboard, you will also have the option to login using your **Blackboard** username and password.

Recommended Websites for Topic Suggestions

[Congressional Research Reports](#)

<http://www.cnire.org/NLE/CRS>

Access to full-text congressional reports on “hot” environmental topics.

[Documents in the News: Current Events Research](#)

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>

“Identifies issues about government making news headlines.” Provides links to web sources for additional information. From the University of Michigan Library's Document Center.

[Hot Paper Topics](#)

<http://library.sau.edu/bestinfo/Hot/hotindex.htm>

A list of topics, along with links to additional web sources on the topics, from the St. Ambrose University Library.

[Idea Generator](#)

<http://www.lib.odu.edu/libassist/idea/index.php>

An extensive list of topics from the Old Dominion University Libraries.

[Pros and Cons of Controversial Issues](#)

<http://www.procon.org>

“Provides pros and cons on diverse controversial topics with facts and quotations from thousands of experts.” Maintained by an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.

[Speakout.com -Issues](#)

<http://speakout.com/activism/issues>

Provides a wide range of information on controversial issues organized by broad topic and subtopics. The articles all include author information and a sidebar with brief Agree/Disagree statements.

Books from Pro/Con Series

The PC Library purchases short, easy to read books on specific controversial topics through pro/con book series, including:

Contemporary World Issues
Current Controversies
Information Plus
Opposing Viewpoints
Taking Sides

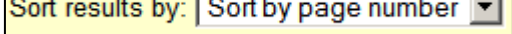
Search the Library Catalog ([Books, Videos, CDs/DVDs](#)) with a Series Keyword search for a list of these books.

The screenshot shows the library's search interface. At the top left is the 'MCCCD LIBRARIES' logo. Below it are navigation buttons: 'Search', 'Databases', 'Course Reserves', 'Ask a Librarian', and 'M'. A search bar at the bottom contains the text 'contemporary world issues' and a search icon. Two purple arrows point to the search bar: one from the text 'Search by series keyword' and another from 'Use the book series title'. The search bar also has a dropdown menu with 'Series Keyword' selected. The page footer includes 'Basic | Browse | Advance' and 'Maricopa Community College'.

Newspapers

Newspapers publish articles on current events, so browsing through newspapers is another way to find a topic for your research paper. You can browse the nation's top newspapers online using [ProQuest National Newspapers](#) (PC Library > Articles > News > National Newspapers). Follow these recommended instructions:

- Once connected to [National Newspapers](#), click on the **Publications** tab near the top left corner of the page.
- Select the title of one of the newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, from the list.
- Select a current date from the list of publication dates.

- Then, resort the articles by page number.  Usually, the best current event articles are published in the first section of the newspaper.

You can also browse the [Arizona Republic](#) online (PC Library > Articles > News > Arizona Republic).

Contact a librarian if you need more help.

[Ask a Librarian](#) 24/7 Chat with a librarian. Accessible from the PC Library Home page
Library Reference Desk (602) 285-7470