

It can be a challenge to find a research topic that appeals to your interests and also has information to back it up, even when you pick a topic that would seem like it should have plenty written about it: Cat memes are a way that people joke about human personality traits and emotions. When you search for information on it, you may not find a whole lot.

So why can't you find anything? After all, the library has millions of books and articles! Surely, you can't be the first person to think of this topic. Can you? So what happened?

While there are several reasons your search may have failed, one common reason is that you're looking for the perfect all-in-one source that addresses your exact topic. Although you may not be the first person to have this particular idea, it's possible that nobody has written about your exact topic at least in the academic literature.

That is, the perfect source that covers all the facets of your topic may not exist.

Does this mean you should give up? Not at all!

Let's look at your topic again, and break it into subtopics. Cat memes are a way that people joke about human personality traits and emotions. If you were to search for all these ideas simultaneously in one of the library's article databases you wouldn't find anything.

But if you search for articles on any of these subtopics individually or for two of them together you'll find quite a bit of information! And if you perform several of these searches, you will cover your whole topic.

Incidentally, while you're searching, you'll probably need to experiment with synonyms and related terms to optimize your search results. You'll also probably discover that you'll need to use a variety of source types some scholarly and some not to make a complete argument. It really depends on your topic.

Good research isn't about finding the perfect article that makes all the connections for you. It's about finding information that helps you form your ideas and tying it together yourself to make a cohesive argument.

If you have any questions about finding research to support your thesis, ask a librarian for help!