

# Identifying Information Needs for a Specific Area of Inquiry

**Type of activity:** Class discussion; Individual activity

**Goal:** Help students identify their specific information needs and questions prior to exploring resources.

**Brief overview:** This activity is designed to guide students through identifying what they already know about a given topic, and what they would like to learn from their research. Instructors can provide feedback on students selected areas of interest, suggest specific research questions, and help students determine an appropriate scope for their research.

## Learning Tasks

Before starting a research assignment, it is important to assess what and how much students know about the task they are being asked to complete. In general, students will dive right into locating sources expecting that they will find something useful. In order to make the transition to locating sources more efficient, work with students to answer some of the following guiding questions:

- What do you already know about your research interest? (Students can use course materials or notes as reminders)
- What would you like to learn more about, in relation to your research interest?
  - If students have a difficult time answering this question, begin by asking what interested them about their research area or why they picked it?
- Are there any specific lenses or perspectives that may be important to consider?

Following up:

- Review student responses and provide feedback as appropriate. You may need to remind students of something already covered or discussed in the course, or provide some suggestions for questions or perspectives they will need to consider.
- This activity/discussion can also help you determine if students are beginning their research with a focus and scope that will help them be successful with their research.

## Adapting to Online Learning

Give students a few minutes to formulate responses to the questions above, then divide the class into small breakout rooms, so they can share their responses with each other and provide feedback to one another. Groups can then report back with some shared information or common experiences. Alternatively, discussion forums may also be appropriate for this activity.