# Finding Encyclopedias for Background Information

**Research Topic:**

**Purpose**

* To gain background information, additional terminology, greater understanding, and context for your research topic using general subject-specific encyclopedias
* To evaluate information sources for both relevance to your topic and quality of information
* To improve information-searching skills

**Part I: Finding Relevant Encyclopedia Articles for Background Information**

1. In the reference section of the library or online if possible, find your research topic in a general encyclopedia such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* or *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*: http://eresources.lib.unc.edu/external\_db/external\_database\_auth.html?A=P|F=N|ID=135|REL=AAL|URL=http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=http://www.nclive.org/cgi-bin/nclsm?rsrc=21.
2. Using the keyword search method demonstrated in class, also identify and locate a topic-relevant/subject-specific encyclopedia.
3. In each encyclopedia, find an article that meets your information need.
4. Read the articles and evaluate them within the context of your information need and according to the evaluation criteria discussed in class.
5. Complete the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | General Encyclopedia | Subject-Specific Encyclopedia |
| Encyclopedia Title |  |  |
| Article Title |  |  |
| Author (if any) |  |  |
| Volume in which article appears |  |  |
| Year of publication |  |  |
| List five words or phrases from the article that you believe are specific to your topic |  |  |
| Does the article offer any major ideas about your topic? List them hear. |  |  |
| Note if the article includes any additional readings, bibliographies, suggested books, or websites. |  |  |
| Which article is more useful? Less Useful? |  |  |

**Part II: Reporting the Results of the Encyclopedia Search**

1. Summarize the encyclopedia article in a paragraph or two.
2. Write one or two paragraphs that discusses both your thinking and your actual searching. Was it straightforward? Any difficulties? Any questions?
3. Email me the results and be prepared to discuss in class next week.