Reading and Taking Notes

- Reading for research
- Taking notes
- Representing your sources
- Avoiding plagiarism

Reading for Research

- The connoisseur vs. the glutton? (Badke)
  - Glutton = read indiscriminately.
  - Connoisseur = read intentionally, selectively, efficiently.
- Reading for research requires reading as a connoisseur.

Reading for Research

- Three main principles:
  - Process each source quickly.
  - Read selectively.
  - Analyze and evaluate constantly.
Reading for Research

• Process each source as quickly as possible.
  – Process each source only once.
  – Read enough to understand the context.
  – Take whatever notes you need.
  – Write down all the publication information.
  – Copy down the call number.

• Read each source selectively.

Reading for Research

• For books:
  – Check title page, preface, forward, introduction.
  – Check table of contents.
  – Check index; compare it with table of contents.
  – Read beginning and end of each chapter.
  – Skim subheadings in each chapter.
  – Skim or read a summary or conclusion chapter.
  – If the book is confusing or controversial, find book review(s).

• For articles:
  – Read an abstract if you can find one quickly.
  – Look for subheadings, if any.
  – Read beginning and ending paragraphs.
  – Glance quickly at the notes.
  – If you still don’t have a good enough idea of the contents, read the whole article.
Reading for Research

- Consider narrowing your list of sources.
  - You have to skim many sources to find good ones.
  - When you identify a short list of crucial sources, read them more thoroughly.

Reading for Research

- Evaluate your sources.
  - Credentials of the author?
  - Reputation of the publisher?
  - Type of journal?
  - Date of publication?
  - Quality of documentation?
  - Visual material?
  - Style and tone of writing? (Serious, popular, neutral, inflammatory, etc.)

Reading for Research

- Analyze as you read.
  - What is the author saying?
  - What perspective does the author have?
  - What is the quality of the argumentation?
  - How does this fit with other sources you’ve read?
  - Identify key propositions, with their evidence, as well as how they fit together.
  - Identify key themes.
  - Write an abstract.
Taking Notes

• Two goals: accuracy and efficiency.
• How do you take notes?
• Use library time efficiently.
• Let your research question guide you.
• Make your notes so clear that someone else could write the paper.
• Write on only one side of the paper.
• Keep on top of your research.

Taking Notes

• When photocopying, document the source.
  – Highlight or mark useful information.
  – Process the material in the margins.
  – Photocopy the title page.
  – Be selective!

Taking Notes

• You can take notes electronically.
  – Notebook computer, PalmPilot, etc.
  – Use note management software.
  – Put keywords or outline headings in your notes.
  – Be selective!
Taking Notes

• Using note cards
  – Only one item of information per card.
  – Each card has a heading (upper right or left corner), text, source information.
    • Heading = heading or subheading from outline.
    • Text = quotation, summary, paraphrase, analysis.
    • Source information = abbreviated publication info.
  – Use different color cards for different functions.
  – Develop a filing system.

Taking Notes

Codices-Earliest Christian-Egypt

The existence of Christian codices in Egypt “was historically plausible if not downright necessary.” There are no historical or technical arguments against their existence.

Tiede, 7

From Vyhmeister, Quality Research Papers, 61.

Taking Notes

Sharman, Swearing, 133. History/Economics (Gender?)

Says swearing became economic issue in 18th c. Cites Gentleman’s Magazine, July 1751 (no page): woman sentenced to ten days’ hard labor because couldn’t pay one shilling fine for profanity. “. . . one rigid economist practically entertained the notion of adding to the national resources by preaching a crusade against the opulent class of swearers.” [A gender issue here? Were 18th c. men fined as often as women?]

Adapted from Booth, et al., The Craft of Research, 75.
Taking Notes

- Other kinds of handwritten notes
  - Organize by source or by topic.
  - Key your notes to your outline.
  - Use keywords in the margins.

Representing Your Sources

- You want to represent your sources fairly.
  - Get all the information you need for your topic.
  - Avoid extraneous information.
  - Accurate enough that the author would agree.

Representing Your Sources

- Three types of handwritten notes:
  - Copying quotations
  - Paraphrasing (putting each sentence in your own words)
  - Summarizing (condensing large chunk of material in your own words)
Representing Your Sources

• Paraphrasing is like translating.
  – Don’t echo the words of the original.
  – Should be accurate and complete.
  – Point of view of the original author.
  – Speak in your own voice.
  – Must make sense on its own.
  – “Guessing in paraphrase is absolutely fatal.”
  – Can be close or free (close is risky).

Representing Your Sources

• Summaries are shorter than the original.
  – Should include all essential points.
  – Doesn’t have to reproduce the order of ideas.
  – Shows an independent perspective.

Representing Your Sources

• Why quote?
  – Source is authoritative; wording is famous.
  – Exact words are important for your argument.
  – Style is distinctive and effective.
• Why paraphrase?
  – Give an account of a viewpoint or argument that you’re going to respond to at length.
  – To interpret difficult material.
  – May be longer than the original.
Representing Your Sources

• Why summarize?
  – Ideas are simple and straightforward.
  – It isn’t central.
  – You’ll use it only as support.
  – Always shorter than the original.

• Advantages/disadvantages of quoting?
  – Accurate representation of the source.
  – Forces you to pay attention to the material.
  – Slow and laborious.

• Advantages/disadvantages of paraphrasing?
  – Processes the material.
  – Slowest method.
  – Invites plagiarism.

• Advantages/disadvantages of summarizing?
  – Quicker than quoting.
  – Processes the material well.
  – Won’t help if you need a quotation later.
  – What if you misunderstood the source?

• Potential problems of paraphrase/summary:
  – Misreading the original.
  – Projecting your own ideas onto the text.
  – Guessing at the author’s meaning.
Representing Your Sources

• Opinions differ on what method is better.
  – B. Spatt: paraphrase or summarize unless a direct quotation is necessary.
  – N. J. Vyhmeister: when in doubt, quote.
  – W. Booth: “One good source is worth more than a score of mediocre ones, and one accurate summary of a good source is sometimes worth more than the source itself.”
  – W. Badke: you may come to understand a quote later.

• Recording quotations
  – Use quotation marks.
  – If you omit, use an ellipsis ( . . ).
  – Be sure that omissions don’t distort meaning.
  – If you insert, use [square brackets].
  – If you add emphasis, use italics and say “[italics added]” or “[emphasis mine]” after the quote.
  – If the source contains an error or peculiarity, put “[sic]” immediately after it.

• Recording quotations
  – Mark page breaks with “//”.
  – Include your own insights in [square brackets].
  – Double and triple check your accuracy.
  – If you record a secondary quotation, document both the original document and the one you used.
  – Use quotations sparingly in your thesis.
Representing Your Sources

- Deal accurately with argumentation.
  - Record both conclusions and arguments.
  - Note the rhetorical importance of a claim.
  - Note the level of confidence of a claim.
  - Don’t mistake a summary of others’ views for the author’s views.
  - When sources agree, see what they agree on.
  - When sources disagree, see what they disagree on.

Avoiding Plagiarism

- Document all but common knowledge.
  - Common knowledge = you can find it undocumented in independent sources.
  - Not sources that use the same original.

Avoiding Plagiarism

- Types of plagiarism:
  - Using published content without documentation (ideas, sentences, words).
  - Using author’s words or phrases without quotation marks, even if you document it.
  - Closely paraphrasing an author sentence by sentence, even if you document it.
  - Booth et al.: “avoid close paraphrases.”
Avoiding Plagiarism

- Paraphrase is plagiarism when you could not have written the paraphrase without frequent reference to the original (Booth).
  - Be aware of where your eyes are when taking notes.
  - If you have to look at the source while paraphrasing, you’re probably plagiarizing.
  - Read, digest, and summarize without looking.
  - Then compare your summary with the original.

Avoiding Plagiarism

- Understandings of plagiarism differ.
  - Between academic fields.
  - Between cultures.
- If you find your own idea in a source, document it.
  - Say that you developed the idea independently.
  - Protect yourself against suspicion of plagiarism.
- Careful note-taking avoids plagiarism.