Research from Home

Skills and Tools for Surviving as a Distance Education Doctoral Student

Presented by Stacey Duran, Public Services Librarian, Boston University School of Theology Library.
To become experts in your fields...

...first you need to become expert researchers.

- Stay aware of developments in your fields.
- Know where and how to find resources.
- Have a plan for organizing and retrieving the research you have completed.
Part 1. Getting to Know Your Fields

...and staying aware of new developments
1. Define your Fields

- Ministry
- Leadership
- Transformational Leadership
- Your context:
  - your specific ministry, denomination or tradition, region, etc. and its social/cultural/political/economic/historical context....
- Any related fields that you want to tie in:
  - sociology, psychology, anthropology, politics, health care, etc.
Your niche is a moving target of where your fields overlap. You have to know ALL of your fields to carve your niche.

These are NOT perfect circles because fields grow and change, and each have their own (many) ideas of where they are going.
Your final project is where you display YOUR niche and what you can contribute to your fields.

Try to build up research and context for each field as you go – find ways to include them in your papers for coursework, or fun opportunities (speaking engagements, conferences) to tie it into your work.
2. Stay Up to Date

• Research! Save your results AND your search.
• Map your fields - focus on important organizations
  • Professional associations
  • Prominent “centers” associated with universities or research institutions
  • Committees within Denomination / Tradition
• Subscribe to listservs and newsletters
• Ask for book catalogs from denominational or academic publishers related to your field.
• Find journals and
  • either subscribe ($) OR
  • sign up for FREE updates from our library databases
Journal Alerts

Step 1: Visit Our E-Resources Page
Journal Alerts

Step 2: Go to the ATLA database
Step 3: Search for a Journal

Publications Search is at the Top

Do a keyword search
Click share and drop down to “Create an alert : Email Alert”

Journal Alerts

Step 4: Create an Email Alert
Fill out the Pop-Up Window and Save!

Step 5: Customize Alert & Save
You can choose 1 month, 2 months, 6 months or 1 year.

The default is 6 months, if you do not specify. You’ll receive an email when the 6 months are up.

Hint: These are temporary.
Part 2. Know Where and How to Find Resources

...aka Library Access
How to Find Books:

- E-Books in the BU catalog – access from home by clicking “View online” and authenticating with your BU Kerberos password.

- STH Library books in the BU catalog
  - Can be picked up during on-campus visits
  - Can be requested through Document Delivery (we mail, you mail back.)

- Use WorldCat to find copies at libraries near you –
  - Boston Theological Institute (BTI) libraries in and around
  - Boston Library Consortium (BLC) libraries in New England
  - American Theological Library Association (ATLA) Reciprocal Borrowing Libraries around the country.
  - Local public libraries or university libraries.
  - Ask about visitor borrowing privileges or to use in library.
How to Find Articles:

- Full-text articles can be found in our BU catalog
  - Click “View online” and authenticate with your BU Kerberos password.

- Full-text articles in hundreds of databases
  - See our E-resources page for links to ATLA and other Theology and Religion databases.

- If full-text is not available online, you can place an Interlibrary Loan request.
  - If we own the hardcopy, we will scan the article and send it to you.
  - If we don’t own any access to the journal, we can request a PDF from another library (free!) and get that to you, often in as little as 1-2 business days.
Part 3.
Organize and Retrieve your Research

A Primer in Zotero
What is the Cloud?

• Your research, anywhere you want it.
• Embedded tools to access your research directly within the software you use most.
• Worried about losing the password? Add a backup email or your link your phone number.
• Worried about losing your research? Save it to multiple clouds.
Managers: What do they do?

- **Organize** your citations.
- **Import** citations from library catalogs, WorldCat.org (and BU WorldCat), databases, and even websites like Amazon or EBay.
- **Export** citations into bibliographies, following well-known style guides (Chicago, Turabian, MLA, APA, etc.)
What else can they do?

• **Store files** attached to your citations (PDFs, word documents).
  
  e.g. Attach your article to its citation in Zotero, and then add a word document with your notes.

• **Keyword search across** thousands of cited sources AND stored files.
Streamlining with Zotero: Beginner.

• **Importing.** Choose Zotero for Firefox (highly recommended) and/or the Zotero stand-alone client (still fun, but not as streamlined).

• **Organize.** Make folders and add citations to folders.
  • Folders work like tags; citations can be in multiple folders without duplicating citation.

• **Exporting.** Download Zotero’s Word for Windows plug-in.
Streamlining with Zotero: Intermediate.

- Add PDFs of any articles you cite directly into Zotero – drag and drop onto the citation. (300 MB free, unlimited is $10/mo.)

- Word-Searchable PDFs.
  - If you use the library book scanners, you can make **word-searchable PDFs**.
  - If the PDF you download from a database is not word-searchable, Adobe Acrobat (on the computer by the library’s microfilm scanner) can transform the file with **OCR** (optical character recognition) so that it is.

- Bonus Hint: remember that you can **highlight and make notes on PDFs**, within regular Adobe reader. No need to print and underline. Upload PDFs with your notes saved first!
Streamlining with Zotero:

- Anytime you use Firefox for non-research needs, if you see something you like, add it to Zotero as you go.
- Anytime you write a paper, create a Zotero folder and add the paper, all the citations you used in the paper, old drafts, your notes, feedback from mentors, even export emails related to it.
Downloading and Setting Up:

- Create a free Zotero account
- Download Zotero for Windows (or Mac or Linux)
- Download the Zotero Connector for Firefox (or Chrome, or Safari, or Opera)
- Open Zotero and log-in to your account in each downloaded program/extension/add-on.
Zotero with WorldCat
Zotero with the ATLA database
Zotero with Amazon and Ebay
Zotero  
Free Storage: PDFs attached to citations
Zotero Paid Storage

- 300 MB free; unlimited only $10/mo.
- Automatic renewals to keep from losing files.
- Credit or PayPal.
- Midyear upgrades prorated.
Research Tips:

- At the beginning, don’t spend more than 10 minutes with any article or chapter.
- Read introduction, conclusion, and skim the middle for road signs and surprises.
- Write a 1 sentence summary of how it contributes to YOUR project (in your notes or in Zotero).
  - Don’t copy and paste.
  - Don’t be vague – “For my lit review! 😊😊” doesn’t tell you why you need this information.
- Then after you have reviewed the breadth of research in your area, go over your 1 sentence notes and reread the important articles more closely.

Write a sentence for your homework readings, too...
they are your first entry point into the field.
If you have any more questions about research or finding/accessing materials, please contact your Personal Librarian (Stacey) or the BU STH Library:

Stacey Duran  
Public Services Librarian  
(617) 353-5357  
sbattles@bu.edu

STH Library  
Reference Desk  
(617) 358-2704.  
sthref@bu.edu

Thank you for your time!