How to use LIRN.net to find reliable resources

Please direct questions pertaining to LIRN to heidi@expression.edu or call 510.594.6955. That’s the librarian’s direct line. The librarian is also available to assist with the research process 9-5, Monday through Friday, in person.

WHAT? LIRN.net (Library and Information Resource Network) is a virtual warehouse of databases full of publications and reliable articles.

WHERE? www.lirn.net

WHEN? Whenever. LIRN.net can be accessed from any computer with Internet access. You do not have to be on campus to use LIRN.

WHO? You! As a student at Ex’pression, we require students to not just “Google” it. Wikipedia is not an acceptable resource for anything academic. Wikipedia can be edited by anyone and is, therefore, not reliable.

WHY? This is an important question. The Internet is full of falsehoods, rumors, hoaxes, misinformation, and information that can appear reliable. In 2013, we live in a time wherein anyone can buy a domain, create a website, and claim to be the utmost scholar on ANYTHING. However, in the academic world, reliable information comes from professionals, academics, scholars, published authors, and those who genuinely are experts in their respective fields. Books and articles that are published and are part of a publication have editors. These editors check facts. The Internet does not have these same kinds of editors to ensure that accurate information is being dispensed.
**HOW?** It’s easy. Follow the steps detailed below and you should be able to find relevant information. If not, come to the library and the librarian will do her best to assist you.

**The below steps are easier to follow if you follow along. This way you can see the process used by the librarian to find information in an efficient manner.**


2. Go to LOGIN (as seen below).

3. Enter the **secret code** and then hit submit.

4. Next, go into InfoTrac, a Gale database. There are other databases to use if you scroll down below that one, but this will be the most relevant and useful, practical and rewarding. Try them all out!
How to use LIRN 2013

Pro Tip – skip this search bar and just hit continue. This will get you directly into searching in InfoTrac and will also permit for you to specify that you are looking for full-text materials, rather than just returning you excerpts.

6. Once you are finally where you want to be, select: DOCUMENTS WITH FULL TEXT so that you get full articles. IF you do not select this, you will only get excerpts, or pieces, of articles. Unless you are prepared to visit a public or university library, you will very likely not be able to find these excerpted articles.
7. I usually stick with just a keyword search to not eliminate any possible hits from my search. Searching for a subject can be restrictive and not find you everything for which you are seeking. Searching for a publication by title can also be restrictive as it may make your search too limited.

8. As a sample search, I looked for "3d animation", using the keyword search.
9. Searching for the search term in quotations homes in precisely on what you are seeking. You may note that searching in quotes returns 1,281 articles in the magazine section. Searching for the same phrase, 3d animation, without quotes, gets five times as many hits. These hits, however, include anything with the words “animation” and “3d” within them, not 3d animation as a phrase.

10. The hits are all returned back to you, by default, by descending publication date. You can see this sort option in the top right of the page. You can choose to sort by ascending publication date or by relevance. I prefer to go with the default option as it reveals the most recent articles. This is important if you are doing a paper or blog that includes statistics. You do not want to have old statistics (if newer ones exist) unless you are comparing old to new.

11. To look at an article, click on the title. As an example, click on the first article that you see on the list. Once it loads, you will see the text of the article along with a toolbox on the right side of the page. As you can see, it lets you select standard options for the article.
Please keep in mind a few things, though. If you bookmark the document, the URL created will be long and unwieldy. However, short of emailing yourself, this is the best way to save an article. You must be logged into LIRN in order to actually use the bookmark.

12. The standard for citations with LIRN is MLA. This is also Ex'pression’s standard for citations, so you don’t have to do anything with that citations option. Please see below for more information pertaining to citations.

13. You can translate articles into a variety of languages. You can listen to the articles, as well. It is useful that the articles are available to listen to, even though they are read by a computer-generated voice. 😊

14. The screenshot below shows the options that are offered to you by LIRN. Your results can come in the form of magazine, academic journal, book, news, and more. You can limit your search by related subject, document type, publication title, or publication date. These are all useful tools. For example, academic journals are likely going to be the most edifying as they are written by professionals in their field or by scholars. They might be the most challenging to read, but they will have an abundance of reliable information. When searching for something within LIRN, I recommend avoiding reviews and blogs.
Reviews are not factual reports that are based on anything more than a user’s personal experience or critique. Blogs are similar, except that reviews need to be edited by an editor. Blogs have no editor, usually, aside from their writers, and have not been peer-reviewed, vetted for facts, or challenged in any way. This makes them unreliable as an academic source.
15. If you scroll down to the bottom of the article you are reading, you will see that a citation, in MLA format, has been done for you. Here is a sample citation:

**Source Citation** (MLA 7th Edition)

[Document URL]
http://go.galegroup.com.ezp-012rc.lirm.net/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA323420089&v=2.1&u=lim15155&it=r&p=GPS&sw=w

Bear in mind that anytime you use someone else’s idea (not just their words), it has to be cited. If you cite something using an in-text citation, you will need to have a “Works Cited” or bibliography page at the end of your paper or website.

Below are some search pro tips.

**Pro tip:** If you don’t know what exactly you are looking for, search using what I like to think of as a “wide net”. If you cast a wide net, you will get back lots of returns. This might be more information than you were looking for. Your best bet, then, is to make your search narrower.

**Examples:**

1. You are looking for something having to do with the band Nirvana.

   - If you search just using the word *nirvana*, you will get mixed responses, some having to do with the band, some having to do with the religious state.

   - To get specific, you might want to add a word like *music* or *Cobain* or *grunge*.

2. You are looking for something pertaining to the technology of the movie “Avatar”.

   - If you search just using the word *avatar*, you are going to find all kinds of things, many totally unrelated to the movie.
-If you search using the words “avatar movie”, you are going to find items related to the movie but not necessarily the technology. Narrow your search and get specific!

-Try searching with “avatar movie technology” or “avatar movie 3D” and you will likely find what you are looking for.

**Pro tip:** If you are looking for something in LIRN and are unable to come up with anything, try to come up with synonyms, or other ways to phrase what you are looking for.

**Example:**

1. You are researching an aspect of the film industry.

   - Instead of searching for film or movies, try motion pictures or cinema or MPAA or Motion Picture Association of America.

2. You are looking for an article related to homosexuals having the legal rights to get married.

   - Instead of searching for “homosexuals having the legal rights to get married”, try Prop 8 or “gay marriage” or “same sex marriage”.

**Pro Tip:** Sometimes being a good researcher is like being a detective. If you are researching something and can’t find what you are looking for, try to find “clues” to solve your “case”.

**Example:** You are looking for information pertaining to female sound engineers and their history in the music business.

- Search for the keywords, “female sound engineer”. If you scroll down just a bit, you will see an article about Elizabeth Cohen who was just elected president of AES (Audio Engineering Society).
-Then, look up “Elizabeth Cohen” and see what you find. You might need to be specific, such as “Elizabeth Cohen engineer”. Chances are that you will find other articles to which she is included. You might even find something she has written!