



## Controversial Topics: Search Strategies

### Finding *Background* Information

Start with reference sources for exploring social, political, or environmental issues at the forefront of national debate. Depending on the topic, your search could begin in a subject encyclopedia, which will provide useful background information and a bibliography of other sources.

To locate a subject encyclopedia in the JSC Library reference collection either in print or online, search the **VSC Library Catalog** using keywords to specify the subject area. For example:

Culture *AND* encyclopedias **Result:** *Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints and Voices*

Gun control *AND* encyclopedias **Result:** *Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of History...*

Elections *AND* encyclopedias **Result:** *Elections A-Z*

### Finding *Current* Information

Search a multidisciplinary database such as *Expanded Academic ASAP*, which indexes periodicals and journals in the arts, the social sciences and the sciences. If you are trying to narrow your topic, enter a *subject* search and look at the various subdivisions denoting the economic, political, historical, moral, psychological or legal aspects of a topic. Other useful subdivisions are “research” or “statistics.”

A *keyword* search can also be used for combining two or more terms to narrow a topic.

nuclear power *AND* public opinion

social media *AND* privacy

### Databases and Periodical Titles

The following titles are widely recognized as indispensable sources for monitoring the political, economic and social topics of our times.

*Congressional Digest* is subtitled *The Pro and Con Monthly* and examines both sides of issues that are debated in Congress. Find full text *Academic Search Premier*. JSC print holdings are 1966 to date.

*CQ Weekly* is a publication for reporting the news and activities of the U.S. Congress. *CQ Almanac* provides a synthesis of activity for the previous Congress and is located in the reference collection at R/328.707/C76c/Year.

*CQ Researcher Online* Use this well-known source for locating objective and accurate information on a current topic. Each issue contains background information, charts, graphs, a chronology of events, pros and cons, and a list of resources for further investigation. It is available from the JSC Library Database List page at

<http://www.jsc.edu/Library/FindArticles/>

*Opposing Viewpoints in Context* is a database consisting of a wide range of resources to include reference works, academic journals, magazine and news articles, and primary source materials. Compare with *CQ Researcher* for coverage of controversial issues. This resource is also available from the JSC Library Database List page at

<http://www.jsc.edu/Library/FindArticles/>

## Issue-Oriented Web Sites

### *CRS Reports*

The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress supplies the U. S. House and Senate with in-depth reports on critical issues of importance to legislators. Your tax dollars pay for this service, and the Open CRS Project intends to ensure that these reports are available freely on the Web at <http://openocrs.com>.

- Selected CRS reports are distributed on the National Library for the Environment Web site at <http://www.ncseonline.org/programs/science-policy/crs-reports> from the National Council for Science and the Environment main page.

### *IssueLab* <http://www.issuelab.com/>

“Bringing nonprofit research into focus,” this site is a clearinghouse for a wide range of research on social issues.

### *Issues and Causes* [http://dir.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/issues\\_and\\_causes/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/issues_and_causes/)

Find links to numerous debate topics on this YAHOO! directory.

*Public Agenda Online* (<http://www.publicagenda.org/>) This site has been favorably reviewed for providing “balanced information on key public issues.”

**Controversial.doc/LinksVerified/lnk/Spring 2012**