

ARKANSAS HISTORY TERM PAPERS: TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

University of Arkansas Libraries
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1. Preparing research papers involves several stages and requires use of several strategies:

Stages	Strategies
Selecting your topic	You may need to narrow, broaden, or redefine the focus of your paper more than once as you find out more about the topic
Discovering information	Use InfoLinks, consult sources listed below, ask for assistance at the Reference Desk on the Lobby Level and/or in Special Collections on Level One.
Organizing information collected	Ask at the Reference Desk about using RefWorks Bibliographic Citation Manager (available from the Library home page under electronic resources by title)
Analyzing information and evaluating credibility of sources	A helpful resource is <i>The Modern Researcher</i> by Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff (Ref LB 2369 .B28 1992)
Selecting information to include	Information you have found to be most helpful to explain and/or document your topic.
Presenting information	Style manuals can help you with footnotes, etc. One popular example is <i>A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations</i> by Kate L. Turabian (RefDesk LB 2369 .T8 1996)

2. Getting started – Selecting your topic

Review your interests, what you like to read about/think about/learn about. Then see if there is a way to incorporate one of your interests into the assignment. For example:

If you are interested in baseball you could find a topic such as the one Leon C. Miller did for his thesis in history-- "But the Majority Wanted Barabbas Too: The Blue Law Battle in Arkansas in the 1920's " (Master's thesis, University of Arkansas, 1980). His thesis deals with, among other things, how a bill submitted to the Arkansas Senate in February 1923 seeking to legalize baseball games on Sundays opened years of debates about allowing commercial activities to be held on Sundays.

Or, if you enjoy float trips or hiking along the Buffalo River, you might research some aspect of the efforts required to preserve it as the nation's first historic river, or the impact it has had on the economy of various communities near it, or the historical significance of some other environmental issue.

One approach to defining your topic is to fill in the blanks in the following "formula:"

The impact of _____ on _____.
[prohibition, school desegregation, World War II, etc.] [a town, a county, etc.]

3. After you have selected your topic, you will begin looking for sources. It is important to understand the difference between “primary sources” and “secondary sources.”

Primary sources convey information from someone who observed or participated directly in a specific event.

Secondary sources are prepared by persons who did not observe or participate in the event.

Primary sources are not defined by their physical format (such as diary, letter, book, etc.). They are defined by whether the “speaker” of the information was an eye-witness to the event described. For example, a hand-written nineteenth-century letter may contain both primary information (about events the writer witnessed or experienced) and secondary information (describing events the writer heard about from others). Primary sources may also be found in published works.

4. Survey the secondary literature -- identify and read journal articles, books, etc., that have been published about your proposed topic or closely related topics. These will give you background on your topic and provide leads for the best sources.

If there are **too many** secondary sources already published about a given topic, you will spend too much time reviewing what is already known, accepted, or disputed about the topic.

If there are **too few** secondary sources already published about a given topic, you will miss having a wide enough starting point for your research and may find it is more difficult to locate additional sources.

5. Formats in which you may find information include:

- a. periodical articles (newspapers, *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, county history journals, etc.)

To identify articles, use indexes and databases, such as:

Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Index to Volumes 1 to 35 (REF F 406 .A6)

Arkansas Gazette Index and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Index* (Reference AI 21 .A75) available for the years 1819-1894 and 1960-1999. Entries for 1994-1999 may be accessed online at <http://library.atu.edu/adgi/index.php>

America: History and Life (online database available from the Library home page under electronic resources by title, <http://library.uark.edu/screens/wam.html>)

To find the periodicals or journals in which articles were published, search InfoLinks by journal title.

To find newspapers, also consult the *Arkansas Union List of Newspapers*. (Ref Desk Z 6952 .A8 .A75) see index in the back by city of publication. An earlier edition, Shirley Brendel's *Arkansas Newspapers* (Reference Z 6952 .A8 A74 1987) has very helpful lists by county and by decade.

- b. books – search first in InfoLinks, the online catalog to this Libraries' materials, under key words related to your topic.

A few good books providing background information are:

Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography (REF and MAIN F 410 .G6 1995)

Describes major events and issues in Arkansas history in chronological order by the terms of office of past governors.

Arkansas Biography (RefDesk and ARK COLL CT 224 .W55 2000)

Provides biographical information about many Arkansans of the past.

Arkansas: A Narrative History. (Reserve and ARK COLL F411 .A772 2002)
Bolton, S. Charles. *Arkansas, 1800-1860 Remote and Restless.* (MAIN and ARK COLL F411 .B72 1998)
DeBlack, Thomas A. *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874.* (MAIN and ARK COLL E553 .D43 2003)
Moneyhon, Carl H. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929* (MAIN and ARK COLL F411 .M74 1997)
Johnson, Ben F. *Arkansas in Modern America: 1930-1999.* (MAIN and ARK COLL F411 .J64 2000)

Examples of primary sources in published works:

Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery Narratives from the 1930s WPA Collections edited by George E. Lankford (MAIN and ARK COLL E445.A8 B43 2003)
Crossett Sawmill Interviews: Recollections of Years 1860-1948 (ARK COLL HD9757.A9 C76 1995)
Adams, Julianne Lewis and Thomas DeBlack. *Civil Obedience: an Oral History of School Desegregation in Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1954-1965* (MAIN and ARK COLL LC214.23.F39 A33 1994)
Paisley, Emma Butler, and Ethel C. Simpson. *Tulip Evermore: Emma Butler and William Paisley, Their Lives in Letters.* (MAIN and ARK COLL CT 275 .P314 A4 1985)
Sisters, Seeds, & Cedars: Rediscovering Nineteenth-century Life Through Correspondence from Rural Arkansas and Alabama edited and annotated by Sarah M. Fountain (MAIN and ARK COLL F411 .S58 1995)
A Village in Time: an Oral History of Okay, Arkansas [compiled by] Margaret Ponder Thompson (MAIN and ARK COLL F419.O38 V55 1997)
Williams, C. Fred, [et al.]. *A Documentary History of Arkansas* (MAIN, ARK COLL, REF, and LAW LIBRARY F 406 .D64 1984) Reprinted in 2005.
World War II: From the Battle Front to the Home Front, Arkansans Tell Their Stories edited by Kay B. Hall. (MAIN and ARK COLL D811.A2 W618 1995)

Also, many other published primary sources are listed in InfoLinks, the Libraries' online catalog. For example:

Many volumes in a series published by the Washington County Historical Society include published letters, journals, and other documents. To locate these, do a title search in InfoLinks for: *Bulletin Series* (Washington County Historical Society). Other county historical societies have also published documents in their county history journals and as separate publications.

Also, search InfoLinks by subject for: **[the name of a specific county], Ark**

You may also see various subdivisions under this subject:

[Name of the specific county], Ark -- Commerce
[Name of the specific county], Ark -- Description and travel
[Name of the specific county], Ark -- History
[Name of the specific county], Ark -- Politics and government
[Name of the specific county], Ark -- Social life and customs

Or, you may search for materials by doing a keyword search for the name of the county or the topic you are researching plus:

AND sources
AND history
AND personal narratives
AND correspondence

To locate texts of important speeches by public figures, try a subject search using the subject heading: SPEECHES, ADDRESSES, ETC., AMERICAN.

- c. Helpful tools for locating background information as well as primary and secondary sources published in a variety of formats:

Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/> This online project “strives to offer a definitive, comprehensive, and accurate record of the twenty-fifth state.” It is a very helpful starting point for many topics.

Arkansas History: An Annotated Bibliography, compiled by Michael B. Dougan, Tom W. Dillard, and Timothy G. Nutt (REF DESK and ARK COLL F411 .D68 1995)

Arkansas Publications Index A developing database of citations to information in selected magazines, county history journals, books, some newspapers, and other Arkansas publications. Available online through the Libraries' Electronic Resources (URL is <http://library.uark.edu:82/>)

- d. Photographs – add the words “pictorial works” to your keyword searches or consult *Illustration Index* (MAIN N 7525 .V3)
- e. Maps – add the word “maps” to your keyword searches or consult an online guide to Arkansas Maps at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/GIS/arkmapquickguid3.00.pdf>
- f. Manuscript collections in this library – use keyword or subject searches in InfoLinks and/or consult the Special Collections home page at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/specialcollections/manuscripts/>
- g. Manuscript collections at other repositories – search the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections at <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>
- h. Theses and dissertations – check InfoLinks and/or search the electronic resource ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Digital Dissertations) (available from the Library home page under electronic resources by title, <http://library.uark.edu/screens/wam.html>)
- i. Microfilm – sources about your topic in InfoLinks with the location code PER-MFILM are located with the periodicals collection in the Lindley and Kaneaster Hodges, Jr., Reading Room on the Lobby Level.

6. Refine your topic and continue your research.

START EARLY -- record your sources – START EARLY – record your sources – START EARLY

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONSULT THE NEXT HANDOUTS IN THIS SERIES:

Arkansas History Term Papers: Locating Secondary Sources

Arkansas History Term Papers: Locating Published Primary Sources

Arkansas History Term Papers: Using Historical Newspapers on Microfilm

Arkansas History Term Papers: Using Manuscript Materials in Special Collections