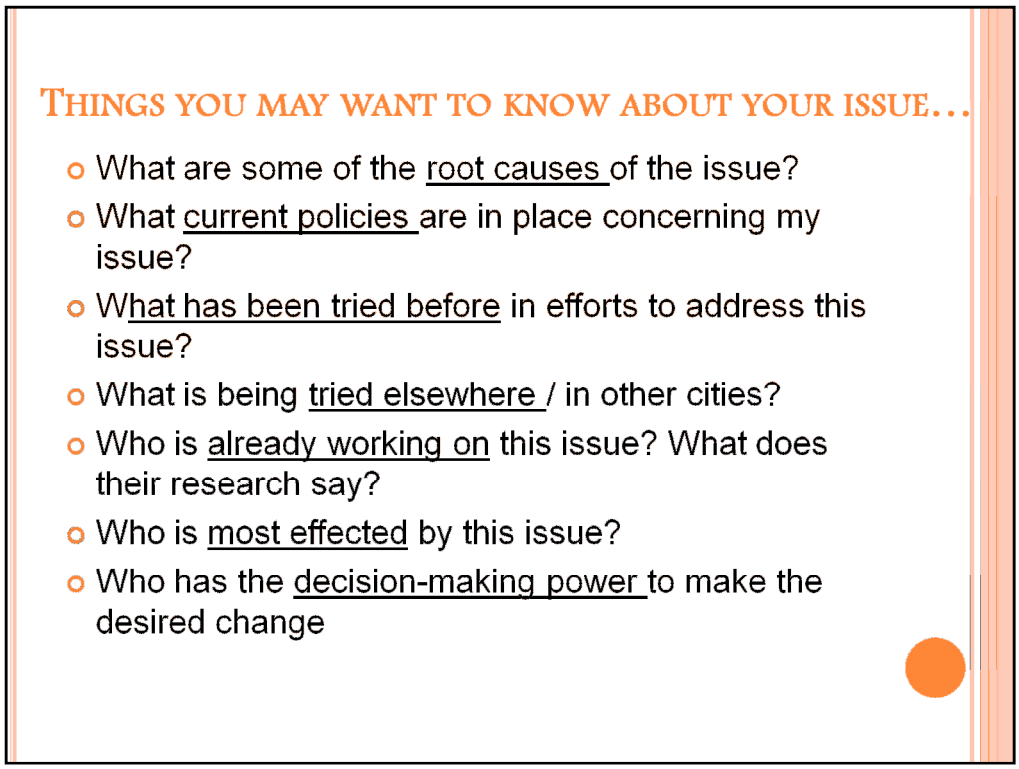
Policy Research 101

A guide to getting started researching interests, issues, laws, and policies

November 2013

SF Youth Commission



- How would you go about researching an issue?
- Some examples of research and investigation are…

TYPES OF INFORMATION YOU MAY WANT TO FIND...

- **Quantitative:** *Concerned with quantity and data*
  - Survey Results
  - Census Information
  - Statistics
  - Ratios and probabilties
  - Budgets and cost figures
- **Qualitative:** *Concerned with quality and meaning*
  - Interviews and Focus Groups
  - Observations (Seeing and listening)
  - Document Analysis
  - Case studies

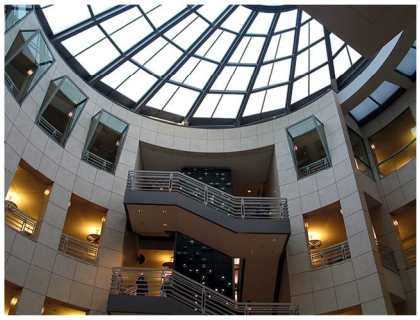
TYPES OF INFORMATION YOU MAY WANT TO FIND...

- **Primary Sources**: *First hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic.*
  - Personal testimonies
  - Audio and Video recordings
  - Laws and legislative hearings
  - Census or demographic records
- **Secondary Sources**: Analysis or interpretation of primary sources.
  - Review articles
  - Book Reviews
  - Editorial
  - Biographies

Try to <u>include some primary sources</u>!

YOUR BEST FREE RESOURCE…

San Francisco Public Library



SFPL BRANCH AND ACCESS INFO…

- You can access library resources by getting a free library card. Ask YC staff how to get a library card.
- SFPL has 28 libraries and the Main Library is right across from the YC office!

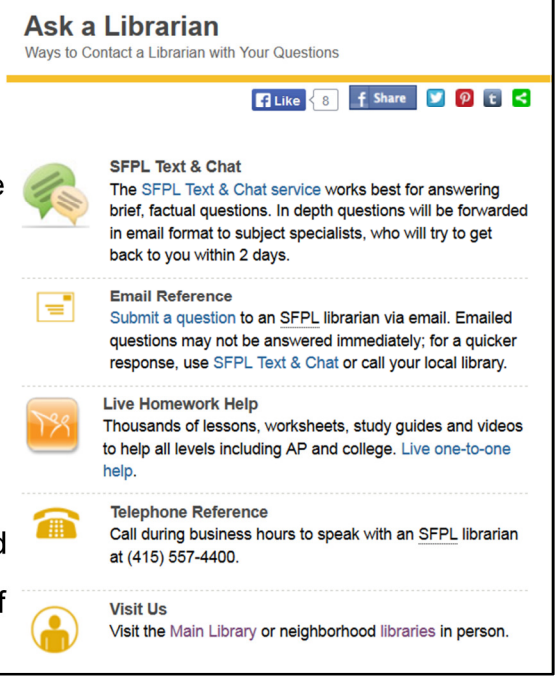
Main Library
415-557-4400

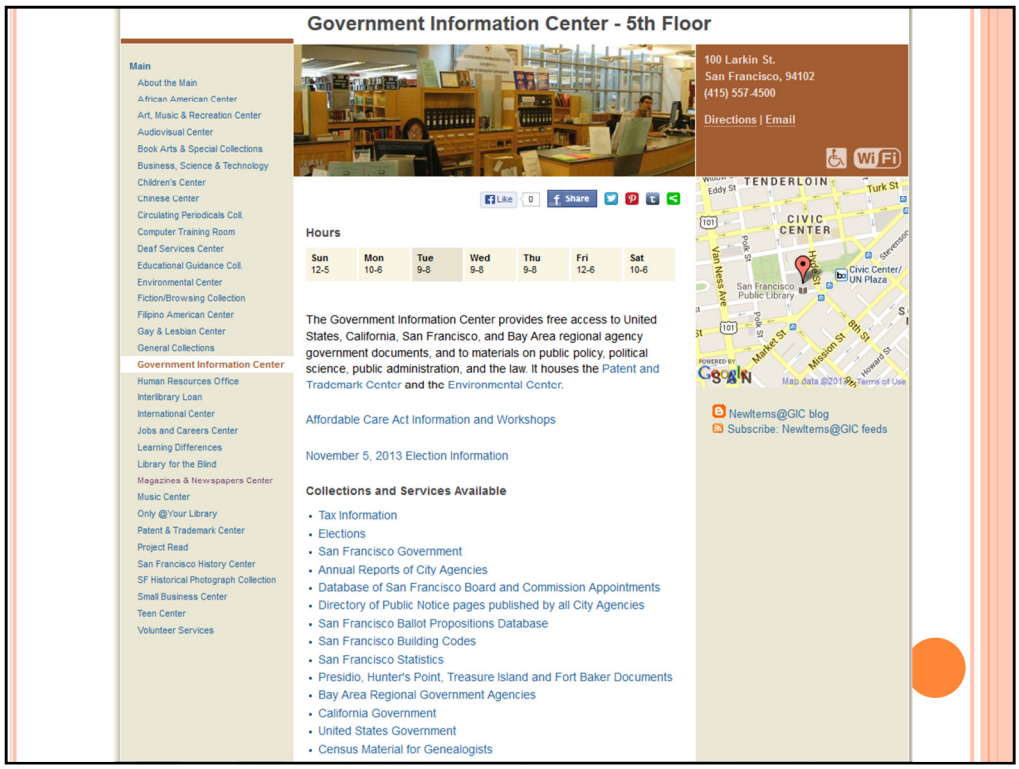
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
12-5	10-6	9-8	9-8	9-8	12-6	10-6

100 Larkin St.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR LIBRARY CARD?

- Ask reference librarians questions by phone, text, or email
- Remotely access millions of journal articles via SFPL's extensive database subscriptions
- Access e-books
- Walk in and request research help from a reference librarian or teen librarian
- Check out most titles through a vast network of partner libraries (Link +)
- ALSO: Check out books, magazines, and DVD's and Access tutoring and homework help and tons of events





The SFPL government information center is housed on the 5th floor of the Main library.

You can also visit through the website for links to databases for searching things like: election info, SF government, census statistics, reports from city agencies, laws, maps, and state legislation.

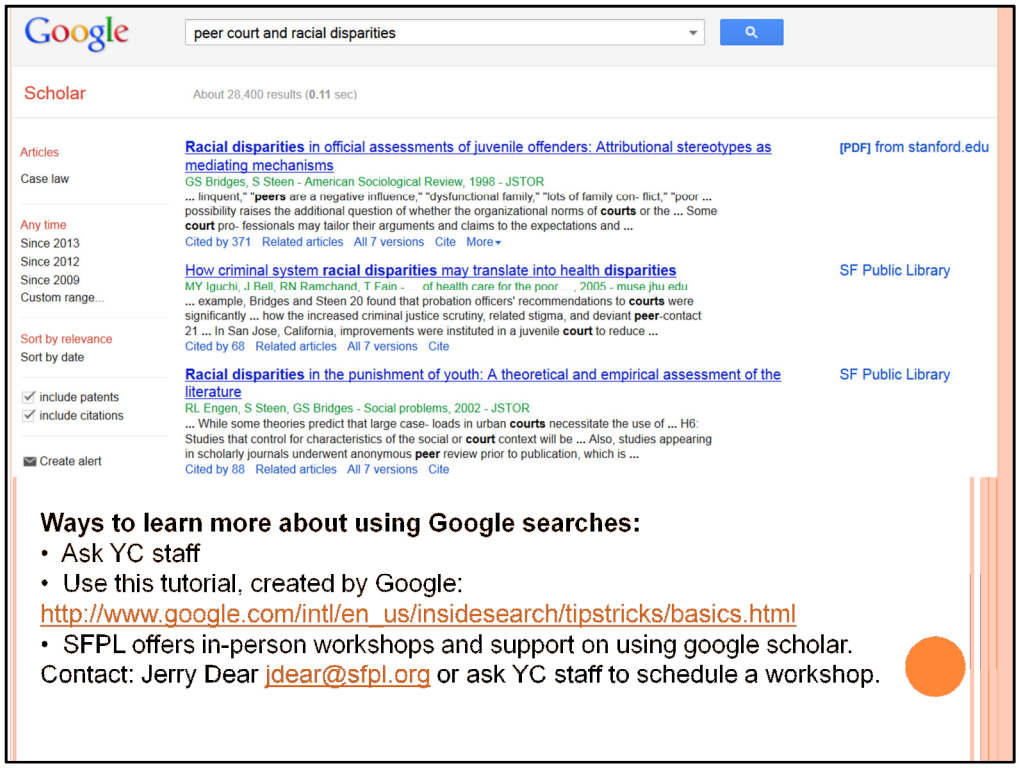
You can access the digitized portions by going to sfpl.org HOME > Libraries > Main > Government Information Center

ARTICLES AND DATABASES

Recommended SFPL Journal Databases

- **Government Information Center**
- **Peer-reviewed academic journals:** Research done on your topic by university researchers. These articles will usually be longer and denser.
- **News Databases:** Comprehensive searches of national or international news on your topic. This is a good way to see what is being done in other places, or what kind of press your issue has gotten.
  - America's News (NewsBank)
  - Ethnic NewsWatch (ProQuest)
  - Newspapers (Proquest)
  - SF Chronicle (Newsbank)
  - Lexis Nexus (not at SFPL, if you have access to university library login)
- **Searching contents of other libraries:** WorldCat (FirstSearch)
- **Statistics and Government Info:**
  - ProQuest Statistical Insight
  - RAND California
  - ProQuest Congressional
- **Databases on particular topics:** Look on the site to see what is available
  - Health and Wellness Resource Center and Teen Health & Wellness
  - Environmental Databases
  - LGBT Life
  - Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center = Pros/Cons

- *Google Scholar* is a freely accessible web search engine that indexes the full text of scholarly literature across an array of publishing formats and disciplines
- You can use it to look up the closest matches to your search inputs using the broadest possible search
- Use Google Scholar settings to add “Library link” to SFPL. Search results will then include links to full text versions that SFPL holds a subscription to.


Google
peer court and racial disparities
Scholar
About 28,400 results (0.11 sec)
Articles
Case law
Any time
Since 2013
Since 2012
Since 2009
Custom range...
Sort by relevance
Sort by date
include patents
include citations
Create alert
Racial disparities in official assessments of juvenile offenders: Attributional stereotypes as mediating mechanisms
GS Bridges, S Steen - American Sociological Review, 1998 - JSTOR
... linquent," "peers are a negative influence," "dysfunctional family," "lots of family con- flict," "poor ... possibility raises the additional question of whether the organizational norms of courts or the ... Some court pro- fessionals may tailor their arguments and claims to the expectations and ...
Cited by 371 Related articles All 7 versions Cite More
[PDF] from stanford.edu
How criminal system racial disparities may translate into health disparities
MY Iguchi, J Bell, RN Ramchand, T Fain - ... of health care for the poor ..., 2005 - muse.jhu.edu
... example, Bridges and Steen 20 found that probation officers' recommendations to courts were significantly ... how the increased criminal justice scrutiny, related stigma, and deviant peer-contact 21 ... In San Jose, California, improvements were instituted in a juvenile court to reduce ...
Cited by 68 Related articles All 7 versions Cite
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Racial disparities in the punishment of youth: A theoretical and empirical assessment of the literature
RL Engen, S Steen, GS Bridges - Social problems, 2002 - JSTOR
... While some theories predict that large case- loads in urban courts necessitate the use of ... H6: Studies that control for characteristics of the social or court context will be ... Also, studies appearing in scholarly journals underwent anonymous peer review prior to publication, which is ...
Cited by 88 Related articles All 7 versions Cite
SF Public Library
Ways to learn more about using Google searches:
• Ask YC staff
• Use this tutorial, created by Google:
http://www.google.com/intl/en_us/insidesearch/tipstricks/basics.html
• SFPL offers in-person workshops and support on using google scholar.
Contact: Jerry Dear jdear@sfpl.org or ask YC staff to schedule a workshop.

Search Terms and Tricks…

TERM:	FUNCTION:	EXAMPLE:
"Quotations"	Search exact words or phrases	"arming juvenile probation officers"
Minus -	Subtract search results that include a certain term	Salsa -dance
Plus +	Search separate terms in a database (not google)	Juvenile + police + training
Tilde ~	Show results with similar terms	~inexpensive: will show cheap, affordable, low cost
Asterisk*	Placeholder when you do not know exact phrase	Another * in paradise
Elipses…	Search ranges	SF Mayors 1930…1960

SEARCHING TIPS…

- Use likely Words
- Avoid using a question
- Avoid phases like, “article about”
- Be Specific; Example) “High School Graduation Requirements” vs. “Graduation requirements”
- Be Brief
- Google ignores common words; Example) ‘summertime jobs in SF’ vs. ‘summertime jobs SF’

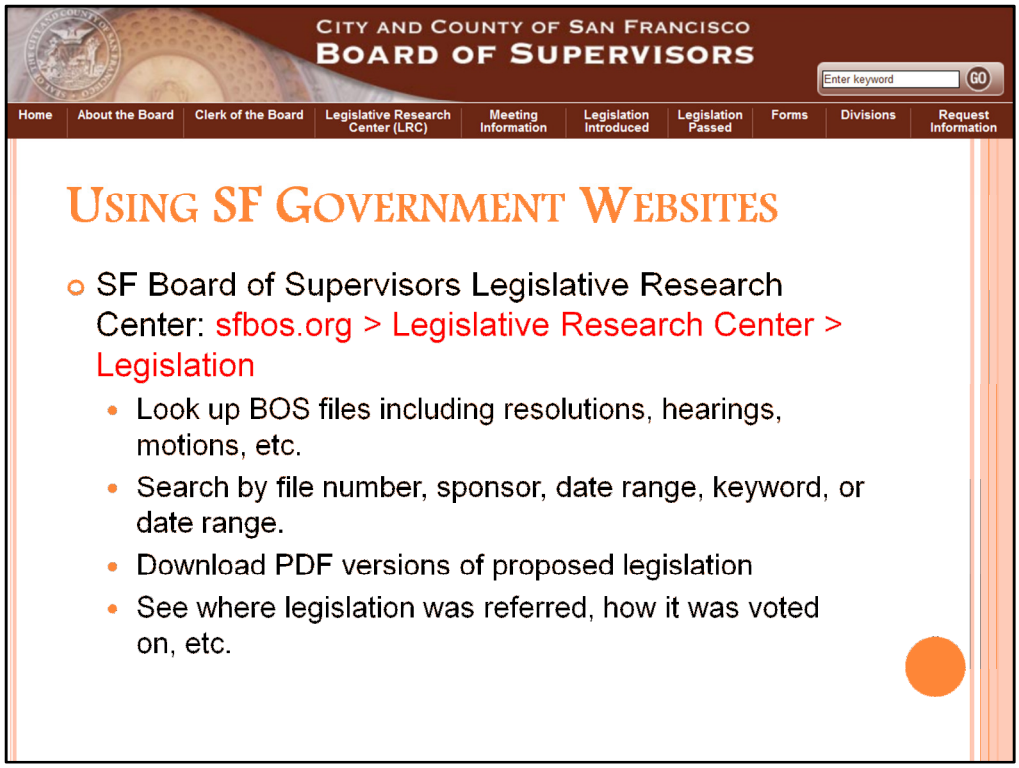
OTHER NON-LIBRARY WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

- **Youth Vote Student Survey**
- **SFUSD.edu**
- **American factfinder**: Census info by area *factfinder2.census.gov*
- **Purdue Online Writing Lab**: has dozens of online guides and tutorials for primary research, writing, formatting citations – a GREAT resource! https://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Youth Vote Student Survey was last conducted in Spring 2012

- Civics Questions: How students engage with their community, government and politics
- Preparing for College: What students know about preparing for college
- School: Students' experiences with school
- Activities & Programs: What programs students want more of
- Homework: How students view and engage with homework
- Health: What students' health, stress, and wellness needs are
- Transportation: How students move around from home and school

SFUSD.edu: Family resources, curriculum, school report cards, Board of Education minutes and reports, the SFUSD student handbook:


CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Enter keyword
GO
Home
About the Board
Clerk of the Board
Legislative Research Center (LRC)
Meeting Information
Legislation Introduced
Legislation Passed
Forms
Divisions
Request Information
USING SF GOVERNMENT WEBSITES
SF Board of Supervisors Legislative Research Center: sfbos.org > Legislative Research Center > Legislation
Look up BOS files including resolutions, hearings, motions, etc.
Search by file number, sponsor, date range, keyword, or date range.
Download PDF versions of proposed legislation
See where legislation was referred, how it was voted on, etc.

You can also use the following link: http://www.amlegal.com/library/ca/sfrancisco.shtml to look up the SF Charter, the admin code, planning code, and other SF laws. These and other links are also available through the library's Government Info Center links for SF.

Looking at Minutes and Agendas for other city Commissions…

- Listen to audio, Watch SF Gov TV, or read minutes or past meetings and agendas of upcoming meetings
- KNOW which commissions are most closely tied to to your work (examples: Police Commission, Board of Education, etc.)
- Use SF Gov TV to see what was discussed and which advocates and members of the public were involved in certain issues: www.sfgovtv.org

•You can look through agendas and minutes from other commissions to learn about upcoming issues and past discussions.
•Example: The Youth Justice committee looks at upcoming agendas for Juvenile Probation Commission, and references past minutes to see what commissioners said about items of interest.

sfgov
SFGOV | Residents | Business | Government | Visitors | OnlineServices
Help
SFGov tv
San Francisco Government Television
Home
Watch SFGovTV
Schedule
Video On Demand
Original Productions
Services
Buy DVDs
About SFGovTV
SFGovTV Original Productions
VOD ▸ Video On Demand
TEXT
FONT SIZE
Stay Safe
CAUTION
SFGovTV's new series on earthquake preparedness for you & your home
WATCH NOW
Search...
Go
SFGov tv
WATCH SFGovTV - The Government Channel
SFGov 2 tv
WATCH SFGovTV2 - The City Channel
View our newest program on inexpensive, fun activities in San Francisco!
:: The Weekly Buzz ::
SF REC & PARKS
Get Out AND Play
:: Get Out & Play
CULTUREWIRE
:: Culture Wire
:: Board of Supervisors
San Francisco PLANNING COMMISSION
:: Commissions, Councils and Boards
Mayor's Press Conference
:: Mayor's Press Conference
View Additional Programs
(Summits, conferences, community events, etc.)
SFGovTV provides a continuous archive of selected meetings and additional programming.
Video on Demand lets you watch these programs at your convenience

Finally….Refine and Ask!

You can always ask staff from city departments!
Government information and records are PUBLIC!
Just be sure to REFINE your questions and
DIRECT them to the correct people.

Looking at Reports from Advocacy Organizations

- Who is already doing work on the issue locally or nationally? GO ONLINE AND FIND OUT!
- Search organizational websites, especially by looking at the "Resources" and "Links" pages to find publications or other organizations doing similar work
- Look at citations in reports and factsheets to see what primary sources were used—then look them up!
- Look at staff bios to see who you can contact to ask for further documentation on their work
- Example: While writing a resolution against the arming of SFPD with tasers, commissioners found that Amnesty International had released a report on deaths from tasers: http://ddq74coujkv1i.cloudfront.net/Taser-Amnesty_Intl_Report-Dec_2008.pdf

Good Luck and Happy Researching!!

Let YC staff know if you have questions!