

# POLICY RESEARCH 101



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

November 2013



## THINGS YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR ISSUE...

- What are some of the root causes of the issue?
- What current policies are in place concerning my issue?
- What has been tried before in efforts to address this issue?
- What is being tried elsewhere / in other cities?
- Who is already working on this issue? What does their research say?
- Who is most effected by this issue?
- Who has the decision-making power to make the desired change

- 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 probabilities
  - 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 **include some primary sources!**



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

<b>Sun</b> 12-5	<b>Mon</b> 10-6	<b>Tue</b> 9-8	<b>Wed</b> 9-8	<b>Thu</b> 9-8	<b>Fri</b> 12-6	<b>Sat</b> 10-6
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100 LARKIN ST.

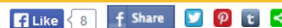


## WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR LIBRARY CARD?

- 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

### Ask a Librarian

Ways to Contact a Librarian with Your Questions



#### SFPL Text & Chat

The [SFPL Text & Chat service](#) works best for answering brief, factual questions. In depth questions will be forwarded in email format to subject specialists, who will try to get back to you within 2 days.



#### Email Reference

[Submit a question](#) to an SFPL librarian via email. Emailed questions may not be answered immediately; for a quicker response, use [SFPL Text & Chat](#) or call your local library.



#### Live Homework Help

Thousands of lessons, worksheets, study guides and videos to help all levels including AP and college. [Live one-to-one help](#).



#### Telephone Reference

Call during business hours to speak with an [SFPL librarian](#) at (415) 557-4400.



#### Visit Us

Visit the [Main Library](#) or neighborhood [libraries](#) in person.


## Government Information Center - 5th Floor

**Main**

- About the Main
- African American Center
- Art, Music & Recreation Center
- Audiovisual Center
- Book Arts & Special Collections
- Business, Science & Technology
- Children's Center
- Chinese Center
- Circulating Periodicals Coll.
- Computer Training Room
- Deaf Services Center
- Educational Guidance Coll.
- Environmental Center
- Fiction/Browsing Collection
- Filipino American Center
- Gay & Lesbian Center
- General Collections

**Government Information Center**


- Human Resources Office
- Interlibrary Loan
- International Center
- Jobs and Careers Center
- Learning Differences
- Library for the Blind
- Magazines & Newspapers Center
- Music Center
- Only @ Your Library
- Patent & Trademark Center
- Project Read
- San Francisco History Center
- SF Historical Photograph Collection
- Small Business Center
- Teen Center
- Volunteer Services



100 Larkin St.  
San Francisco, 94102  
(415) 557-4500

[Directions](#) | [Email](#)

WiFi



100 Larkin St.  
San Francisco, 94102  
(415) 557-4500

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**Hours**

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

The Government Information Center provides free access to United States, California, San Francisco, and Bay Area regional agency government documents, and to materials on public policy, political science, public administration, and the law. It houses the Patent and Trademark Center and the Environmental Center.

Affordable Care Act information and Workshops

November 5, 2013 Election Information

**Collections and Services Available**

- Tax Information
- Elections
- San Francisco Government
- Annual Reports of City Agencies
- Database of San Francisco Board and Commission Appointments
- Directory of Public Notice pages published by all City Agencies
- San Francisco Ballot Propositions Database
- San Francisco Building Codes
- San Francisco Statistics
- Presidio, Hunter's Point, Treasure Island and Fort Baker Documents
- Bay Area Regional Government Agencies
- California Government
- United States Government
- Census Material for Genealogists

The SFPL government information center is housed on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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](http://sfpl.org) HOME > Libraries > Main > Government Information Center



# ARTICLES AND DATABASES

The screenshot shows the San Francisco Public Library website. The main navigation bar includes Home, Books & Materials, eLibrary, Services, Kids, Teens, Calendar, Libraries, and About. The eLibrary section is active, showing a search bar and a list of categories: eBooks, eLearning, eMusic, Magazines & News, Research Tools, SF Historical Photos, and Videos. The 'Articles and Databases' section is highlighted, displaying a list of databases. A red box highlights the following text:


**A collection of journals covering the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature and more. Among its full-text coverage, it includes full-text of the New York Times back to 1985. Updated daily.**

Below this, another database is listed: **Academic Search Complete | (Ebsco)** FULL TEXT 1985 - present. **A multi-disciplinary full-text database** with more than 7,100 full-text periodicals, including more than 6,100 peer-reviewed journals. In addition to full text, this database offers indexing and abstracts for more than 11,200 journals and a total of more than 11,700 publications including monographs, reports, conference proceedings, etc.

Other databases listed include ALLDATA Online (Printable full-text automotive diagnostic and repair information manuals) and America's News | (NewsBank) (U.S. news content from local, regional, and national sources that include printed and online newspapers, blogs, journals, newswires).

On the right side, there is a chat window titled 'SFPL Chat' with a text input field and a 'Send' button. A red arrow points to the chat window. Below the chat window is a red circle.

## 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

Scholar About 28,400 results (0.11 sec)

Articles **Racial disparities in official assessments of juvenile offenders: Attributional stereotypes as mediating mechanisms** [PDF] from stanford.edu  
 GS Bridges, S Steen - American Sociological Review, 1998 - JSTOR  
 ... Inquent, "peers are a negative influence," "dysfunctional family," "lots of family conflict," "poor ... possibility raises the additional question of whether the organizational norms of courts or the ... Some court professionals may tailor their arguments and claims to the expectations and ...  
 Cited by 371 Related articles All 7 versions Cite More

Case law

Any time  
 Since 2013  
 Since 2012  
 Since 2009  
 Custom range...

Sort by relevance  
 Sort by date

include patents  
 include citations


Create alert

**How criminal system racial disparities may translate into health disparities** SF Public Library  
 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

**Racial disparities in the punishment of youth: A theoretical and empirical assessment of the literature** SF Public Library  
 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

**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](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](mailto: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 phrases 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](http://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

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](http://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.





<http://www.amlegal.com/library/ca/sfrancisco.shtml>

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Publishing Corporation

**Library**

**San Francisco, California**

This online version of the San Francisco Municipal Code is current through Ordinance 209-13, File No. 130785, approved October 9, 2013, effective November 8, 2013, operative January 1, 2014.

Please select how you would like to view the codes from the options below.

All San Francisco Codes

- 1996 Charter
- Administrative Code
- Business and Tax Regulations Code
- Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code
- Environment Code
- Fire Code
- Health Code
- Municipal Elections Code
- Park Code
- Planning Code (including Zoning Maps)
- Police Code
- Port Code
- Public Works Code
- Subdivision Code
- Transportation Code

Building, Electrical, Housing, Mechanical and Plumbing Codes\*\*

Comprehensive Ordinance List

**Address:**  
City of San Francisco  
City Hall, Room 168  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett  
Place  
San Francisco, CA  
94102-4678

**Official website:**  
[www.sfgov.org](http://www.sfgov.org)

**Order San Francisco Codes**

**Comprehensive Ordinance List**

**Note:** The Bookmark flags may have trouble displaying accurately in some newer versions of Internet Explorer. If you experience difficulty in obtaining a URL link for a title, chapter or section, you may wish to try an alternate browser such as Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. Additionally, the staff at American Legal Publishing would be happy to assist you as needed.

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](http://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.

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San Francisco Government Television

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TEXT | FONT SIZE | A | A

**Stay Safe**  
CAUTION  
SFGovTV's new series on earthquake preparedness for you & your home

View our newest program on inexpensive, fun activities in San Francisco!  
:: The Weekly Buzz ::

SF REC & PARKS  
**Get Out AND Play**  
... Get Out & Play

CULTURE WIRE  
... Culture Wire

QUICK

**WATCH NOW** Search... Go

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WATCH SFGovTV - The Government Channel

**SFGov 2 tv**  
WATCH SFGovTV2 - The City Channel

  
:: Board of Supervisors

  
:: Commissions, Councils and Boards

  
:: 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://ddq74coujv1i.cloudfront.net/Taser-Amnesty Intl Report-Dec 2008.pdf>



**GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY  
RESEARCHING!!**



**Let YC staff know if you have  
questions!**

