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 affected 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>12-5</td>
<td>9-8</td>
<td>9-8</td>
<td>9-8</td>
<td>12-6</td>
<td>10-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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)
  - LexisNexis (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.
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 [dear@sfpl.org] or ask YC staff to schedule a workshop.
### Search Terms and Tricks...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Quotations&quot;</td>
<td>Search exact words or phrases</td>
<td>&quot;arming juvenile probation officers&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus -</td>
<td>Subtract search results that include a certain term</td>
<td>Salsa -dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus +</td>
<td>Search separate terms in a database (not google)</td>
<td>Juvenile + police + training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilde ~</td>
<td>Show results with similar terms</td>
<td>~inexpensive: will show cheap, affordable, low cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asterisk*</td>
<td>Placeholder when you do not know exact phrase</td>
<td>Another * in paradise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipses…</td>
<td>Search ranges</td>
<td>SF Mayors 1930…1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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’
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:
**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.
• 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.
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://ddq74coujky1i.cloudflare.net/Taser-AmnestyIntl_Report-Dec_2008.pdf](http://ddq74coujky1i.cloudflare.net/Taser-AmnestyIntl_Report-Dec_2008.pdf)
GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY RESEARCHING!!

Let YC staff know if you have questions!