# Chapter Four

## Researching Your Topic

Research work is like any other work students encounter: a little basic knowledge makes the process more efficient. There are basically five things students need to know to be successful doing research for this course:

- When to use **primary** and **secondary** sources.
- How to judge among **scholarly**, **professional**, and **popular** publications.
- How to research **patrons**, **problems**, and **paradigms**.
- How to find **books**, **journal articles**, and other library resources.
- The proper way to cite sources according to **MLA Style**.

These five aspects of research are covered below.

### Primary and Secondary Sources

How will you show that your topic is important and needs to be addressed? It will not be sufficient to rely on an emotional appeal or to expect people to take you at your word. Research will be required to demonstrate the nature and extent of the problem in a logical way. Your instructor may require primary research as well as secondary research, but knowing how and when to use them is important.

**Primary Research**
Primary research is data that you personally collect about the topic. Experiments, surveys, questionnaires, direct observations with note keeping, and interviews are typical examples of primary research. Data you collect in experiments, observations, and surveys can be presented in charts or graphs to quantify the problem. Questionnaires and interviews can be helpful when opinions are important.

**Secondary Research**
Even if you do collect your own research, you will need other research to interpret your data for others. That is why it is necessary to look at published sources. Secondary research is the term used to describe the search for published information, which you must take at second-hand. The value of secondary sources depends a lot on their credibility (see below).

For your proposal, you might do both primary and secondary research to introduce the problem, but you must do secondary research for the literature review (or paradigm) that helps interpret the problem and explain your solution. Each proposal stands or falls on

the quality of its research and all need a solid foundation of published and authoritative research to support their claims. Without published sources you will be very hard pressed to develop an explanation for your plan of action.

## Scholarly, Professional, and Popular: Evaluating Secondary Sources

If there is one thing that students should learn in college, it is that not all information is equally valid or credible. When evaluating sources, students need to keep in mind the type of sources they are, since that will greatly affect the power they have to persuade your reader. Three terms are key: scholarly, professional, and popular.

### Scholarly Sources

Scholarly sources are articles and research studies published in peer-reviewed journals. They show what scholars in a particular discipline are thinking about topics based on their research. In the scholarly journals, you will see that discussions reference accepted concepts and models. These readings can be difficult because the contributors to these journals use specialized vocabulary that someone outside of or fairly new to the discipline may not quickly comprehend. Realizing that these sources are the strongest authorities you will have for your proposal should help you persevere even when the reading is challenging. Scholarly sources are found in college and university libraries. Many journals are now in electronic form and accessible on the web, but many are still only in print form. When you access the Rutgers Libraries, you will see whether articles you need can be downloaded or whether you need to go to the library and photocopy or take notes on the information.

### Professional Sources

Newsletters, journals, magazines, and websites that are used by the practitioners of a given profession or discipline are known as professional sources. They include up-to-date information about existing and new products, business applications, and commonplaces of the profession. You might find articles there about successful companies or methods written by respected people working in that field. These sources have some authority and can be an excellent source when looking for models of success. But because the writers of these publications often do not do research themselves and because they often do not take a critical perspective on their specialty or on companies in their industry (where these writers might be employed), professional sources are not considered quite as authoritative as scholarly sources. These publications can often be found in the Rutgers Libraries or through internet sources.

### Popular Sources

Newspapers, magazines, and web sites that are readily available to the public and written to a broad audience are generally called popular sources. While they are the easiest sources to find, they have the least value when authority is being established for a proposal that requests funding. Popular sources can, however, supplement the scholarly and professional sources and show how your topic is of general social interest. Many internet sources would fall under the category of popular.

Based on this brief discussion of the three types of sources, students can see that often the more easily obtained the information is, the less authority it has. The most authoritative sources are generally written for a specialized audience. Recognize the category of the sources you use so you can judge how well they bolster your own authority. Each proposal stands or falls on the quality of its research and all need a solid foundation of published and authoritative studies, theoretical works, and other documents.

## Researching the Patron, Problem, and Paradigm

Often when students begin their research, they see their job as finding out as much as they can about the problem that they want to address. While this can be a good way to start your research, you need to recognize that finding information about the problem is only part of your task. You will also have to do research on funding sources (the patron) and ways of solving the problem (the paradigm). Each part of the project will require different types of research.

### Patron

How will you find a funding source? And how will you pitch your project to him or her? You will have to do research to find the best patron for your project and to learn more about what interests them. Often this research is not directly cited in your paper, but it is among the most important in making your paper realistic.

Even if the organization that will be funding your project is the company you currently work for or the school you attend, you will still want to do some research to find out how your project fits with their mission and values. Look at your company website. Look at what is online about your school or about the specific department in your school you are going to ask for funding. How can you connect your project with the issues and problems that concern them?

If there are no local sources of funding for your project, you will need to do some research to see what organizations (including government agencies, private philanthropies, and corporations) share your interests. Here are three good methods for getting started finding a funding source:

> **Method 1: Go to the Library**
> The Rutgers Libraries has a wealth of print sources that can help you find funding. These sources are often more complete than sources you find on the web, though they might not be as current or quick to browse. Ask the reference librarians for help getting started.
>
> **Method 2: Check Out Online Clearinghouses**
> There are a number of grant clearinghouse websites, where you can quickly access many groups that provide funding for projects. Some good websites to start your search for funding include the following:

*The Foundation Center*
http://fdncenter.org/ and http://fdncenter.org/funders/
This is the best clearinghouse for charity and private philanthropy information.

*Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance*
http://www.cfda.gov/
The official government clearinghouse for all sorts of funds.

*Grants.gov*
http://www.grants.gov/
A clearinghouse for different granting agencies of the U. S. Government.

*Community of Science*
http://www.cos.com/
A clearinghouse for science related projects.

*National Science Foundation*
http://www.nsf.gov/home/grants.htm
The NSF sponsors theoretical research in the sciences.

*Environmental Protection Agency*
http://www.epa.gov/epahome/grants.htm
The EPA sponsors environmental projects.

*National Institutes of Health*
http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/
The NIH sponsors health and health education grants.

*U. S. Department of Education*
http://www.ed.gov/funding.html

**Method 3: Browse the Web**

Since most of organizations who might fund your project probably have a website or are listed on the web, a search engine is not a bad initial search tool. Good search engines include Google (http://www.google.com), AltaVista (http://www.altavista.com/), AlltheWeb (http://www.alltheweb.com/), and FirstGov (http://www.firstgov.gov/fgsearch/index.jsp). Try entering your keywords for your topic, perhaps along with the words "grants" or "funding," and you should at least get some hints about who is interested in your subject area. This method involves a lot of trial and error, and you are better off starting with Method 1 and Method 2. But doing a general web search should at least give you a better sense of your topic and who is interested in it.

**Problem**
How can you prove that there is a problem? And how can you emphasize its importance? To make a good case, you will have to do some research on your topic with the goal of finding numbers or of defining your problem well enough to understand its scope.

Before you begin your research on the problem, it's a good idea to think about the specific information that would be useful to your case. Some questions to consider:

- What are the most important numbers needed to convince your patron that this problem is important to address? How can you quantify its scope and scale?

- Can you conduct some of this research yourself, or use research that you have already done? Or will you need to rely on secondary sources of research?

- In order to quantify the problem, what are your best sources of documented evidence? What secondary sources might have information that can help your case?

- Which groups or organizations might have already studied the problem? And where might they publish their findings?

If you can get good numbers, you will be able to make especially powerful visual aids.

**When You Can't Find the Numbers You Need**

- *Keep trying*. Often, especially with online research, key information is hidden behind the keywords that you haven't tried. For instance, say you are writing a project on making a community service project mandatory at a local high school. You need to find information about teens and community service or volunteering. A search in Statistical Universe using the keywords "teens" and "community service" or "volunteerism" will get you nowhere. The perfect graph for your project can only be found under "surveys—opinions and attitudes, by age." Start early and be persistent. Don't do your research when you are pressed for time.

- *Try extrapolating*. Often it is possible to take percentages from national studies and use them to make educated guesses as to how many people will be affected by an issue on a local level. In order for this to work well, your local population must be entirely typical with the rest of the larger area. For instance, if you absolutely can't find rates of smoking for your town, you could use state or local averages and then work out the equation. If 30% of people in New Jersey smoke, one could assume that 30% of people in Paterson
smoke. However, if your local area is different in some significant way from the larger population, you should not rely on extrapolation.

  A town populated by a significant number of young families cannot be compared to a town with several senior citizen retirement villages. If you are reduced to

documenting your local problem by extrapolating from national statistics, you must be honest about it and clearly show how you have arrived at the figures you are using.

- *Fill in the gaps with primary research.* Sometimes a problem is so new or so local that there is not a large amount of hard data to draw from. In that case, you will have to do some surveys or other primary research. As much as possible, make sure that your surveys are legitimate and convincing. Your sample size must be large enough and varied enough to be representative. The fact that twenty of your friends say they dislike Economics 101 is not good evidence that a university should drop the course. As you survey, keep track of what day and time you did the survey, how many people responded, how many of each gender, age, and so on, depending upon the subject of the survey. You should also ask your survey questions in such a way that they will generate good statistical responses. If you conduct your surveys well and present them carefully, they can enhance your credibility. For example, which of these two statements below seems most convincing and why?

    - Fifty percent of the people I surveyed disliked Economics 101.

    - Out of 1,000 students, 50% stated that they ranked Economics 101 (on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the lowest) at 3 or below.

- *Use uncertainty to your advantage*. Sometimes a lack of knowledge is the best evidence you have that a problem exists. Scientists use uncertainty all the time in order to show that more research must be done. If you are writing a research proposal, you should use the lack of statistical information as part of your documentation of the problem. Be sure to discuss the possible dangers or lack of opportunities that result from "not knowing." Perhaps a central part of your project could be to gather data.

**Paradigm**
How do you support your claim that your plan is the best way to address the problem? A paradigm gives you that support. You might think of it as the research-based rationale for your plan. It authorizes your claims about the problem and justifies your methods.

If you are doing a scientific research project in any given field, your paradigm will derive from previous research. That previous research offers you both examples of practice (what experimental methods did they use?) and a way of understanding the results (how did the experiment support the hypothesis based on previous theory?) Defining your paradigm outside of the hard sciences is not as straightforward, because there is usually not as strong a consensus as there is in the sciences about which methods and theories are best. But you can still use the model of the sciences to guide you in researching support for your plan.

You might think of paradigms as ideally having two parts, along the scientific model: **models of success** and a **theoretical frame**. A model of success is an example of how others have successfully addressed the problem in some other context. A theoretical frame is a language for explaining how a certain solution will work.

Let's say that you wanted to take on the problem of crime on campus. To find research to justify a plan of action, you would want to search for models of success and find a theoretical frame. You may not need both of these things to succeed in writing a persuasive proposal, but looking for them will help you in many ways.

**Searching for a Theoretical Frame**
If you were studying sociology or law enforcement, it would be logical for you to take on the problem of campus crime since your previous studies had already prepared you for the issue. You might already have an idea, in fact, of what theoretical frames might relate to the issue. If you don't, then at least you would know where to look to find out. You could talk to professors. You could look in your textbooks (especially in their bibliographies). Ultimately, though, you will need to do some research to see what others have written in journal articles and in books about ways of addressing the problem. That's where you will find your theoretical frame and the language you will need to explain it.

To address the problem of campus crime, you would want to look at what researchers have written in the areas of sociology or law enforcement (the fields that seem most applicable to your problem – though other fields might offer ideas as well). One theory of crime you might encounter in your reading is the "broken windows theory," which suggests that if you address small crimes (such as broken windows) you will be addressing the larger issue because, for one thing, small crimes and big crimes are committed by the same group of offenders.

**Searching for Models of Success**
If you were looking to address the problem of crime on campus, you would logically look at programs at other schools that helped to reduce crime. You would probably also want to look at towns and cities, since they are also potentially good models. You could look for these models in a number of ways.

- You might look in professional or popular sources, such as college journals or newspapers and magazines, which might have stories about successful crime stopping initiatives.
- You could look on the web, where schools might have posted information about their programs (especially those that proved successful).
- You might ask experts in law enforcement who they look to for models, and then try to interview people involved with the programs they suggest.
- If you have already begun your theoretical research, you may have come across some examples in scholarly sources that you can then try to find out more about.

Once you found those models of success, you would want to repeat the research process to see what specific information you could turn up about how and why those programs worked. The more information you could turn up the better, since you will need that research to justify your own choices in constructing a plan.

**Merging Theory and Practice**

To construct a coherent project, you will need to merge theory and practice so that your theoretical frame explains the model of success you are using to justify your plan. A good example of this merging of theory and practice in the case of campus crime would be to use the model of the New York Police Department who made their city the safest in the nation by cracking down on low-level street crime (from petty theft to vandalism), following the logic of the broken windows theory. You could use the NYPD as your model and draw examples of good practice from them and explain them using the language of theory.

## Finding Books, Journal Articles, and Other Sources at the Library

Today there can never be the excuse that you "couldn't find any research" on something. You will see, in fact, that there is usually too much information on any topic. Just try a search on the Index called "ABI / Inform" (from the Rutgers Libraries home page, http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/, click on "Indexes and Databases" and click on "ABI / Inform" which is listed near the top in alphabetical order). Enter key words about your topic and you should find that there is lot of information out there (much of which is accessible online in full-text format). And if you try a search at Google, likely you will get too many hits to look through in a sitting. You must learn to be selective, have confidence in your ability to analyze what you read, and just simply get to work.

The best place to start is the Rutgers Libraries home page, http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu. If you are using a computer off campus, it can be set up to access the Rutgers Library: on the library's home page, click "Off-Campus Support" for instructions. The library home page is set up for easy use, listing the **IRIS Catalog** (listing all book and periodical holdings at all Rutgers Libraries), **Indexes and Databases** (offering expansive bibliographic references, and sometimes full text, of articles in various fields), and **Subject Research Guides** (offering links to library resources and quality web sites reviewed by Rutgers librarians).

The only way to learn how to use the library or its home page is by using it. But if you have trouble getting started, there are tutorials online (click "Library Instruction and Tutorials"). Your class will also have a library tour to familiarize you with the resources available at Rutgers, so be prepared to ask questions of the reference librarians. Remember the reference librarians can be the best teachers of library skills: the library is their classroom; you are their students. Show them what you have done; ask them questions; seek their advice whenever you get stuck looking for information. The more specific your question, the better the help you will receive.

If you can't locate a source at Rutgers, you can order any book or journal article through interlibrary loan, usually very quickly (no more than two weeks). If you start your research early, you should be able to get all the information you need. Be careful, however, to continue your research efforts while awaiting sources you have ordered. The deadline for completing an assignment will not change if your ordered source does not arrive on time or proves less than helpful.

## Some Advice on Searching the Internet

You should never rely upon general internet searching as your main source of information. Internet sources tend to be too simplified and too much driven by self-interest to serve as the basis for your research. You should always seek a wide variety of sources, using books for depth of coverage, peer reviewed journals for thinking in your field, and periodicals for timely coverage of recent events. The internet should be only a supplement to these sources. These suggestions are therefore intended to give you some ideas about using the internet as an assistant rather than a crutch.

- Often web searches can help you most in developing a list of keywords that you can use later in searching through databases and books. Try putting quotes around specific phrases, like "binge drinking" rather than binge AND drinking since this will help narrow your search to only sources that use those words together. Remember the basics of Boolean logic: use "and" to narrow and "or" to expand categories.

- If you are beginning with a broad subject (cancer, AIDS, alcohol, guns), try starting with the "web guides" prepared by Rutgers Librarians (accessible from the Rutgers Libraries home page at http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu). Use the guides to help narrow your topic and to get ideas.

- An increasing number of statistical sources are available on line. You can also use Statistical Abstracts of the United States and Statistical Reference Index, which are available in the reference section of most campus libraries. If you are seeking government statistics, check out "thomas" the government center for information at http://www.thomas.gov/. For New Jersey information, try http://www.state.nj.us/. For census information, go to http://www.census.gov/. If you were looking for statistics on campus crime (as in our example above), you would definitely need to visit the Office of Postsecondary Education's Campus Security Statistics Website at http://ope.ed.gov/security/index.asp.

- If you find a good web site, see if it contains links to others or lists of references you can find in the library. Often, web sources are abstracted versions of much better journal articles or books. Go to the original source!

## A Brief Guide to Using MLA Style

The following guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive but merely to help avoid typical pitfalls in citation by students. For the purposes of this class, you should use citation style as given by the Modern Language Association. You will need to know MLA Style for both in-text citation and your Works Cited page. The following are guidelines based on current MLA recommendations. For more information on the intricacies of MLA citation, consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (available in the reference section of all campus libraries). For the latest recommendations on web reference, go to the frequently updated MLA website at <http://www.mla.org/>. The following examples of format are all based on those sources.

### In-Text, Parenthetical Citation

MLA citation format tries to simplify references by eliminating footnotes and replacing them with short parenthetical citations that are elaborated in your Works Cited. The main purpose of in-text citation therefore is to link information in your text with entries on your Works Cited page. For that reason, you need to make the connection between citations and sources clear by using the same primary name in your text as the primary identifying reference in your Works Cited.

Unlike scientific citation formats, which emphasize author and date of publication, MLA emphasizes author and page number. The two pieces of information you should have in a textual reference are the last name of the author and the page number (if the text is paginated). Page references are especially important when you are using a direct or indirect quotation from the text. If you mention the author(s) in your sentence, then it is not essential to put the name(s) into your parenthetical citation. Two examples:

> According to James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, “at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence” (33).
>
> According to the classic study of the “broken windows” phenomenon, disorder leads inevitably to crime (Wilson and Kelling 33)

In parenthetical or in-text citation with up to three authors, you should include all of the names; with four or more authors you should cite the primary author and indicate others with “et al.” For example:

> One author: (Jordan 98)<br>
> Two authors: (Jordan and Slinkoff 98)<br>
> Three authors: (Jordan, Slinkoff, and Presser 70)<br>
> Four or more: (Jordan, et al. 78).

In text citation for four or more authors would like this:

Jordan, et al. found an increased cancer rate in overweight mice (78).

Sometimes page numbers are not available, especially when dealing with electronic sources. In this case, the MLA suggests that you use paragraph numbers for reference, especially when quoting. Otherwise, simply use the author's name in your parenthetical citation. And in the case of quoted material not spoken by the author, be sure to indicate that the line was quoted in (abbreviated "qtd in") the source you used and was not an original citation. For example:

> The case of Abner Louima is the exception that proves the rule in Siegel's view: "'the lesson of the 'broken windows' applies to cops as well as to criminals. With 'broken windows' you say, if you allow the small things to get out of hand, the big things will be worse'" (qtd in Skelley, par. 10). According to Siegel, the 70th precinct commander did not enforce rules vigorously, which allowed disorder and, eventually, criminality among his officers (Skelley).

If the source has no discernable author, then use the title (or the first few words of longer titles, followed by an ellipses). And be sure to use the title for reference both parenthetically and in your works cited:

> *Parenthetical citation for un-paginated non-authored source:*
> Safir's first action was to focus on the seemingly "trivial" crime of jumping subway turnstiles to avoid paying the fare ("Commissioner describes NYPD 'success story'").
>
> *Works Cited listing for un-paginated non-authored web source:*
>
> "Commisioner describes NYPD 'success story.'" Yale Bulletin and Calendar
>
> 28.18 (January 28, 2000) 3 March 2003
>
> <http://www.yale.edu/opa/v28.n18/story4.html>

**Non-accessible Sources**

Since the whole purpose of including citations and references is to provide your reader with the means of using the same sources themselves for future research, you should consult with your instructor about which sources you can and cannot use on your works cited page. The MLA does offer style formats for citing e-mail messages, postings to a listserv, and personal interviews. Original research that you have done to find information about your project (for example, survey results that you have gathered) should not be recorded on your works cited page, but should be explained clearly in your text.

A survey of 45 Busch campus students conducted at the Busch Student Center on April 1, 2003, showed an overwhelming number avoided taking Friday classes.

In an interview on January 12, 2003, Robert Spears, the Director of Parking and Transportation for the Rutgers, New Brunswick campus, discussed some of the problems that made additional parking spaces on College Avenue Campus impractical.

In a March 10, 2003 email response to my inquiries, Professor Dowling said that he thought student evaluations "put pressure on faculty to do the popular thing rather than the right thing" and therefore ought to be replaced by another system.

**Your Works Cited Page**

Your works cited page is just that: it reflects the works that you have actually used in your text, not works that you consulted for background information but did not use for reference. According to the latest guidelines, it should be double spaced consistently throughout, even within entries. Do not skip extra space between each entry. You must list your sources in alphabetical order, either by the author's name or the title. If you have two or more sources by the same author, list them in alphabetical order by title and replace the author's name with "---." in the second entry. Do not number your entries on the page—alphabetical order and indentation will separate one entry from the next.

The following examples will give you some idea of format; for more complete information, consult with your instructor or the MLA Handbook.

**A book:**

Jacobs, Jane. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York: Random House, 1961.

Wilson, William H. The City Beautiful Movement. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.

**A book with more than one author:**

Wilson, James Q. and Richard Herrnstein. Crime and Human Nature: The Definitive Study of the Causes of Crime. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

**A book chapter:**

Wilson, James Q. and George Kelling. "Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety." Thinking About Crime. Ed. J. Q. Wilson. New York: Vintage Books, 1985. 77-90.

**Periodicals:**
If the periodical is paginated continuously throughout the year, only the volume number is needed. If each issue begins with page 1, include the issue number after the volume number separated by a period. For example, for "volume 17, issue 4," use 17.4.

Brown, Lawrence and Wycoff, M.A. "Policing Houston: Reducing Fear and Improving Service." Crime and Delinquency 33.1 (1987): 71-89.

Strecher, Victor (1991). "Revising the Histories and Futures of Policing." Police Forum 1.1 (1991): 1-9.

**Newspaper:**
If the paper is not nationally known, include the place of publication in brackets.

Fox Butterfield, "Crime Fighting's About-face," New York Times, January 19, 1997, p. 1E; also see Fox Butterfield, "Reason for Dramatic Drop in Crime Puzzles the Experts," New York Times, March 29, 1998, p. 14Y.

Geoffrey A. Campbell, Geoffrey. "Crime Is Down All Over." New York Times October 14, 1997. 14

**Government documents and other reports:**

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States, 2000 Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001.

**Web references:**
Just as with print sources, web sources should be cited in the order of author, title, source (including the URL in this case). Differences arise because of the impermanence of web sources and the fact that many do not have clear authors or titles on their pages. The impermanence of web sources makes it necessary to add your date of access. In the case where there is no listed author, then use the title as your main listing, and only if there is no author or title should you merely list the source. In any case, be sure to list the web address of the actual article or page you are using, not simply the address of the website

you accessed first. Do not expect your reader to be able to follow all of the links you followed to find the article. If you are only referring to a website in general, and not a specific article or page on the site, you can just record the name and web address in your text without including any specific listing in your Works Cited.

Muzzey, Elizabeth H. “Biochemical Reactions in Toddlers.” Journal of Northeastern

Medicine 36 (2001): 47 pars. 17 Apr. 2001 <http://www.jnm.org/etc.etc.html>.

“Capitalism.” World Book Online. Vers. 3.2.6. Nov. 1999. World Book. 3 Dec. 2000

<http://www.worldbook.com:106>.

“Trickle-down Economics.” Compton’s Encyclopedia Online. Vers. 1.6. 1995. America

Online. 10 July 1997. Keyword: Compton’s.

**E-mail:**

Samson, Dolores. E-mail to the author. 3 May 2001.

Samson, Dolores. “Re: Customer Service.” E-mail to the author. 3 May 2001.

**Interview:**

Vandeen, Harry. Interview with Jon Stewart. The Daily Show. Comedy Central. Los

Angeles. 8 Aug. 2001.

Sansevarius, Buran. Telephone interview. 7 Dec. 1999.

Jorge, Eric. Personal interview. 1 May 2000.

## Sample Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is simply a preliminary Works Cited page to which notes (annotations) have been added after each entry. The main information required would be a sentence or two summing up what the source says and how it will be useful to your project. You might also want to say whether you will be using the source to quantify the problem or to set up the research paradigm for your project.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Boccacio, Frank. “Improving Customer Service.” Entrepreneur’s Weekly 14 (2001): 5-8.

This article will help support my customer service improvement plan and offers models of success. The author gives several examples of the beneficial results companies experienced when they adopted better customer relations strategies. I can use it to help set up a paradigm of successful models.

Fiegel, Darla and George Kartin. Starting your own Small Business: A New Guide. New York: Cornell UP, 1998.

Although this book is a guide to setting up a business, it includes valuable information about the importance of a well thought-out customer relations plan. It also gives a guide on how to train new employees in good customer service that I can modify for use in my project to improve customer service at our auto service.

Sensenig, Becca, et al. “Customer Dissatisfaction at Major Auto Dealerships.” Wall Street Journal 9 Oct. 2000: D6.

Sensenig lists the major complaints that customers seeking auto service have, and she shows that major dealerships are not paying attention to the levels of dissatisfaction in their clientele. I can use this article to show that the problems I see at Sharlene’s are common among auto service centers. I could also use it as part of my argument that paying attention to customer complaints will give us a marketing advantage over dealerships.

“Taking Time to Listen.” CNBC Online. 1999. CNBC, New York. 8 Sept. 2002 <http://cnbc.com/takingtime/last/93205.html>.

This is a transcript of a program on CNBC about the benefits of listening to customer complaints in a genuine way. The advantages of listening carefully to customers before their auto service and following up after the service has been completed are shown. The disadvantages of some current methods, like bribing customers to give a good report by giving them a free oil change or tank of gas, are clear from the client interviews. I can use quotations from some of the clients to show Sharlene’s that there is a problem with their current methods.