

Research Methods in Economics

Nicholas Shunda
University of Connecticut
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Today's Agenda

- Purpose of research
- Secondary vs. primary sources
- Search strategies and “filtering”
- Popular economics resources:
 - Info./texts
 - Data sources
- Conclusion

Why Do Research?

- Summarizing what is known in a field
- Contributing to knowledge on a topic
- Solving a problem/puzzle
- Weighing in on a debate

Primary vs. Secondary Sources

- Secondary sources:
 - Popular summaries of scholarly research
 - Addressed to a general audience
 - A great place to start for ideas
 - Tip: DON'T only use secondary sources!

Primary vs. Secondary Sources

- Secondary sources: examples
 - BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
 - The Economist: <http://www.economist.com>
 - NYTimes: <http://www.nytimes.com>
 - Wall Street Journal: <http://www.wsj.com>
 - LexisNexis: <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/> => “Most Used Databases” => “LexisNexis News”

Primary vs. Secondary Sources

- Primary sources:
 - Technical studies and scholarly research
 - Addressed to a professional/scholarly audience
 - Examples: Books, book chapters, edited volumes, journal articles, technical reports, working papers
 - Problem: Sometimes too mathematical or too technical!

Search Strategies

- Browsing:
 - “Browsing means manually examining a document (e.g., a printed bibliography or an online directory) for useful information or references to useful information” (Greenlaw, 2006, p. 33).
- Examples: Reviewing a table of contents of a book/journal; browsing at <http://www.jstor.org> => “Browse”

Search Strategies

- Keyword searches:
 - “Keyword searches use search engines on the World Wide Web or on specialized databases” (Greenlaw, 2006, p. 35).
 - Tip: Start broad, with a topic, then narrow your search by using more specific words in your search phrases
- Examples: Searching at <http://www.jstor.org> => “Search” => “Advanced Search”; searching at <http://www.sciencedirect.com> => “Search”

Search Strategies

- Boolean:
 - A tool for focusing searches
 - Three operators: AND, OR, NOT
 - AND: Search will look for anything with all the terms
 - OR: Search will look for anything with any of the terms
 - NOT: Search will omit anything with these terms
- Examples: Searching at <http://www.jstor.org> => “Search” => “Advanced Search”

Search Strategies

- “Filtering”: Successful searching is all about:
 - Finding some potentially helpful material
 - Evaluating the relevance of the material
 - Throwing out the irrelevant material you find
 - Working with the remaining relevant material
 - Checking the material you are working with for “hints” and “leads” about other possibly valuable sources

Economics Resources: Info./Texts

- Secondary sources:
 - Wikipedia: <http://www.wikipedia.com>
 - Google: <http://scholar.google.com>
 - Newspapers' websites: e.g., BBC, NYTimes, Wall Street Journal
 - LexisNexis: <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/> => “Most Used Databases” => “LexisNexis News”
 - Resources for Economists: <http://www.rfe.org/>

Economics Resources: Info./Texts

- Primary sources: Journal articles
 - EconLit: <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/> => “All Databases” => “Databases by Title [E]” => “EconLit through EbscoHOST”
 - JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org> (great “starter” journals: *Journal of Economic Literature* and *Journal of Economic Perspectives*)

Economics Resources: Info./Texts

- Primary sources: Journal articles
 - Sciencedirect: <http://www.sciencedirect.com>
(journals that JSTOR does not have and often up to the present issue)

Economics Resources: Info./Texts

- Primary sources: Working papers
 - Research Papers in Economics (RePEc):
<http://ideas.repec.org> (also has links to published journal articles)
 - Social Science Research Network (SSRN):
<http://papers.ssrn.com>
 - National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER):
<http://www.nber.org/papers/>

Economics Resources: Data

- General statistics:
 - US population:
 - Census <http://www.census.gov>
 - Statistical Abstract of the US
 - US government(s):
 - FedStats <http://www.fedstats.gov>
 - European Union:
 - EuroStat <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

Economics Resources: Data

- Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA):
 - <http://www.bea.doc.gov>
 - National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS):
 - <http://www.bls.gov>
 - Consumer Price Index (CPI)
 - Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX)
 - Current Employment Statistics (CES)
 - Productivity

Economics Resources: Data

- National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER):
 - <http://www.nber.org>
 - US business cycles
- US Federal Reserve Board of Governors:
 - <http://www.federalreserve.gov/rnd.htm>
 - Financial data (e.g., credit, flows of assets, interest rates, money supply)

Economics Resources: Data

- St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank:
 - <http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/>
 - FRED II (Federal Reserve Economic Data)
 - Relatively long time-series of macro variables for the US (e.g., consumer price indices, exchange rates, interest rates, money aggregates, trade flows)

Economics Resources: Data

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):
 - <http://www.sourceoecd.org> => “Statistics”
 - Development, employment, health, national accounts
- The World Bank:
 - <http://www.worldbank.org/data>
 - World Development Indicators (WDI)
 - Global Development Finance (GDF)

Economics Resources: Data

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF):
 - <http://www.imf.org> => “Data and Statistics”
 - GDP growth, inflation, unemployment, debt
 - International Financial Statistics (IFS): exchange rates, trade, government accounts, national accounts
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP):
 - <http://www.undp.org> => “Human Development Data”
 - Human Development Index (HDI)
 - Human Poverty Index (HPI)

Economics Resources: Data

- World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER):
 - <http://www.wider.unu.edu/> => “Database”
 - World Income Inequality Database (WIID)
 - Comprehensive database of measures of income inequality (Gini coefficient) across several countries and through time

Economics Resources: Data

- Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS):
 - <http://www.ipums.umn.edu>
 - Vast amount of socioeconomic data
- US Census Current Population Survey (CPS):
 - <http://www.census.gov/cps/>
 - Vast amount of socioeconomic data

Economics Resources: Data

- National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS):
 - <http://www.bls.gov/nls/home.htm>
 - Vast amount of data on labor market activities
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID):
 - <http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/psid>
 - Vast amount of data on households' income sources, employment, occupation, poverty status

Conclusion

- Research is a form of learning
- It is not easy, but the more time and effort you put into it, the better will be your results
- Some aspects of research are experimental and “do-it-yourself”
- Faculty are here to give you some direction

Resources for Writing in Economics

- Steven A. Greenlaw *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research*. Houghton Mifflin Company. New York. 2006.
- <http://college.hmco.com/economics/greenlaw/research/1e/students/index.html>
- Deirdre N. McCloskey *Economical Writing*. Waveland Press, Inc. Prospect Heights. 2000.
- <http://www.waveland.com/Titles/McCloskey.htm>
- Robert H. Neugeboren *The Student's Guide to Writing Economics*. Routledge. New York. 2005.
- http://www.routledge.com/shopping_cart/products/product_detail.asp?sku=&isbn=0415701236&parent_id=&pc

Remaining Talks in the Series

- “What is a Literature Review?”
Wednesday, February 21, 3:00-4:30pm
Monteith 339
- “Outlining, Organization, and Cohesion”
Monday, March 12, 7:00-8:30pm
Monteith 339
- “The Analytical Essay”
Tuesday, March 20, 3:00-4:30pm
Monteith 339
- “Presenting Statistical Evidence and Graphical Information in Written Work”
Wednesday, April 4, 3:00-4:30pm
Monteith 339