Where and How to Start Pacific Based Research

For Pacific Islands Studies 401: Capstone
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Center for Pacific Islands Studies
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Pacific Studies Research:

What do I do to get started?

Outline

Conducting research on, about, and/or for Pacific communities presents a lot of different challenges. What is important is to know what is available to you. Research on Pacific Islanders has been conducted since the first European explorers came into the Pacific. Depending on the community and island group, information exists going back four hundred years or as little as twenty.

The important thing to know is that Pacific research is never limited to one area of study, it is inter-disciplinary – meaning – topics fall into a range of areas: history, sociology, anthropology, literature, music, art, social work, health, botany, etc … just to name a few.

What this means is that as student it is important to look in more than one place for information. This may seem overwhelming, but it can be managed, and librarians are available to help guide you.

Step One:
Pick your topic: Understand that it is okay for your topic to evolve and change once you begin research. Sometimes a topic is narrowed, sometime broadened, and sometimes it will shift in a new direction. All of this is part of the research process.

Step Two:

Consider resources: This is also important and will shape how you find things. Do you need books, journal articles, essays, reports, newspaper articles, other materials? Have a bit of a think about what kinds of materials you want to look for first before you start looking.

What is the difference between these things?

Government Reports and Documents: These range from reports from agencies to items such as constitutions. They have a variety of editors and fact checkers, and may rely on different experts in a field. They range in time of publication with some taking longer to publish than others. Laws, in particular, may go through various stages of publication due to updates and changes.

Books: Take the longest to publish, may be written by an expert in a field, but not always. There are many editors for a book as well as many revisions, which is why books take longest to publish. Books are good because they allow for an in-depth exploration of a topic. They do however, take the most time to read.

Journal articles: Take months to publish, usually written by experts on a subject. Peer reviewed journal articles are those that have been reviewed by other experts on a subject, who give comments, advice, and editing; before publication.
Popular Magazines: Written by journalists and published in a weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly basis, they may take some time to write, but are usually about current events and ideas. Edited and may be fact checked.

Newspaper Articles: Written by journalists, these are events often as they have happened. Edited and may be fact checked.

Blogs, Twitter, and other Social Media: Sometimes written by journalists, most often by anyone, these may contain reporting, but are usually opinion on events as they happen. No editing or fact checking.

Wikipedia: Any one can edit or contribute. This is a good place to get an idea on a topic, but for real information look at the bottom of the Wikipedia article and check the citations.

Step Three:

Where to look: literature search breakdown

This is where you go to find information and documents that is not necessarily available by searching the internet

Books: library catalog, such as voyager, is a good place to look for books. You will not find journal articles in here, but you may find the titles of a journal.

Journal Articles: Academic databases. Students should never pay for access as access available to all students through the library webpage.
Step Three point five (3.5):

Once you have your topic, what key words and phrases do you need to search effectively for resources and information? You know where to look, this is HOW you can search for information using key words or phrases.

Search tips: Boolean Operators

Boolean operators are a common feature of most, though not all, scholarly databases and can help you define the relationship between search phrases or search terms.

AND is used to narrow a search by finding all terms in a document.

Example: Palau AND fisheries

OR is used to expand a search by finding any term in a document.

Example: Tokelau OR Kiribati

Parentheses are used to group terms, phrases or ideas together.

Example: (rugby OR football) AND (Tonga AND Samoa)

Using these will increase your chance at finding documents, resources, and other information.

These search techniques can be used in most major databases and in the Voyager catalog.

Step Four:

Revise topic: Based on the research you have conducted, do you want to revise your topic? Do you need to expand or narrow your ideas? Do you need to consult you teacher, or find new resources? Perhaps develop a new search strategy based on your revisions? Feel free to talk with your instructor and/or a librarian about any new changes.
Step Five:

Piecing together: After searching and revising, you are ready to put together the information you have found with your own thoughts on your topic! Consider how the resources you have discovered support your ideas, how they may have steered them in other directions. This is where you can really start writing.

As always, your instructor and/or the librarian can provide further guidance if needed.

Pacific Islands Studies Resources:

The below links may help you get started on research for your project. Included are links to resources specific to Pacific Islands research.

Theses from the Center for Pacific Islands Studies:
http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/20084
On-line, full text of many plan a and plan b masters theses from the Center for Pacific Islands Studies.

Publications from the Center for Pacific Islands Studies:
http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/2826
Includes links to full text of The Contemporary Pacific and Pacific News From Manoa newsletter, to name a few.

Pacific Studies Library Guides from the Pacific Collection:
http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/cat.php?cid=20891
Library research guides on different subjects. Compiled by the librarians in the Pacific collection.

State of Hawai‘i Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/
Excellent for data and statistic about Hawai‘i. Includes census information and economic information which may be useful.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
http://www.spc.int/en/featured-publications.html
The SPC published a lot of reports and information. Much is online, but for those that are not, the Pacific collection may have them.
The Information Cycle
From: University Library University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/informationcycle.html

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The Publication Cycle
From: Carelton University Library
http://www.library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/help/pubcycle.gif

Handbooks, Encyclopedias...
Research
Informal Communication
Patent

Idea

Review article, book, thesis

Magazine/Journal Article

Conference Presentation

White paper; Tech. report