Literature searches

Citing sources
Why search (and cite) the literature of your field?

- **Credibility**: To be sure that your work is based on current, sound research--the best in your field.
- **Focus**: To be able to place your work in context.
- **Efficiency**: To be sure that you’re not duplicating work unnecessarily.
- **Professional ethics**: If you don’t show your awareness of current research and give appropriate citation, you risk appearing naïve or arrogant or dishonest.
Where do literature searches appear?

- Sometimes they are separate documents.
- More often, they are embedded in complex documents (proposals, reports, thesis).
Where to find literature to search?

• Start with a respected, current source, and look at that author’s list of sources.
• Talk to your professor or to a professional in that field.
• Ask a reference librarian for help in searching
  – Books
  – Journal articles
  – Electronic databases
  – Conference proceedings
Where to find literature. . . ?

• Use the Internet judiciously.
  – Find out as much as you can about the site and the site manager, the date of posting, and whether or not the material was peer-reviewed.
  – If a posted article is important to your work, print the article for future documentation.

• Join a professional listserve and put out a request for information.
Other keys to searching

- Know your purpose in searching the literature.
- Narrow the scope of the material you’re searching.
- Assess the author’s credibility.
- Get a sense of how the piece of material relates to others.
- Write a summary of the key points of the article.
Gather bibliographical details systematically.

- **Books**
  - Author (s) or editor’s full name
  - Exact title
  - Publication information
    - Year of publication
    - City of publication
    - Publisher
    - Edition
    - Page numbers

- **Articles**
  - Author (s) or editor’s full name
  - Exact title of article
  - Publication information
    - Exact journal title
    - Volume and issue
    - Year of publication
    - Page numbers
Getting details systematically

• Electronic sources
  – All of the information for articles previously listed
  – URL of the site
  – Type of source/site
  – Date you accessed it
Retrievable vs. non-retrievable sources

- **Retrievable sources:** sources that anyone could access.
  
  These go into the list of sources cited at the end of the document, and they’re noted by superscript numbers in the text.

- **Non-retrievable sources:** sources that are personal; sources that not every member of the public could access
  
  - Unpublished papers but not dissertations
  - Personal Web sites
  - E-mails and conversations
  
  These sources are cited in footnotes and indicated by symbol at the bottom of the page, NOT superscript numbers.
As you do the literature search, what’s your purpose?

- **Critical or evaluative** summary of information relevant to your research
  - Not just a report but rather a critical discussion of the validity of this work and its relevance to your work.
  - Choose a method of organization that suits your purpose.
    - To trace development, organize your findings chronologically.
    - To reflect controversy, organize around the positions held.
When to cite

• You must cite a source when you use that person’s ideas or specific facts.
  – Within quotation marks, if the quote is exact.
  – Without quotation marks, if you are paraphrasing or noting the key idea or fact.

• You do not have to cite ideas/facts that are common knowledge.
How to cite retrievable sources according to AIAA standards.

- Journals:

- Books:
• Reports:

• Transactions/Proceedings:
• AIAA Meeting Papers:

• Unpublished thesis or dissertation:
• Web site (not a personal one)
  – Lego Mindstorms Community Page,
    http://mindstorms.lego.com/eng/community/resources/default/asp,
    Date accessed: 10/20/2002
How to cite non-retrievable sources

• Non-retrievable sources are footnoted with symbols, not with numbers.
  – Personal conversation:
    • *E.G. Greitzer, personal communication, October, 2002.
  – E-mail:
    • **E.G. Greitzer, personal e-mail, October, 2002.
Class activity

• Study the models handed out to see how the writer moves from one piece of literature to the next.
  – Do you get an idea of how valuable this previous work is? How it relates to the writer’s project?
• With your partner, list 5 places you might find sources relevant to your project and decide who will explore them.
  – Do you have some sources that are peer-reviewed (sources whose validity have been reviewed by academic colleagues)?
  – Check this list with your project advisor.
Sources cited

1. AIAA Web site: http://www.aiaa.org/
   Date accessed, October 3, 2002.