

HIST 325/328 Guide to Research Resources for Late Antiquity and Church History

I. Print reference books

Oxford Classical Dictionary (3rd ed.)
Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium
Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World
Cambridge Ancient History 2nd ed. vols. 12-14
PLRE (Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire)
[Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt—not owned by SFSU]
On specifically Christian topics:
Encyclopedia of the Early Church
Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church

II. Finding books: searching OCLC WorldCat

Keyword searching
Identifying items held at the SFSU Library
Author searching (identifying primary sources)
Identifying author designators
Sorting and limiting
Identifying subject headings relevant to your topic
Person as subject headings
Combining searches
Call number searching

III. Finding articles: journal article databases

ATLA Religious Studies Database
L'Année Philologique Online
[International Medieval Database]

IV. Obtaining books and articles

LINK+
ILLiad
Online full text (JSTOR, etc.)

V. Primary texts in translation: frequently encountered collections

Loeb Classical Library
Ante-Nicene Fathers
Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
Fathers of the Church

Research techniques

I. Keywords

Choosing good keywords requires some thought!

- Synonyms: try different ways to say the same thing (words, combinations)
- Unusual words (best: proper names; second best: technical terms)
- Use several words common words together

II. Reference books

How to read an entry: look for 3 things

- Basic information on the topic
- Select bibliography: translations of primary texts; secondary works
- Cross-references to related topics: follow them!

III. Book searching: using WorldCat

What is WorldCat?

- Union catalogue of US and some European research libraries
- Essentially, it lists all books (at least in English and western European languages)

Advantage: you won't need to look for books anywhere else

Disadvantage: you will probably find too many things

Challenge: narrow your search to find the BEST books for your topic

Basic rules for database searching (as with anything on a computer):

- Experiment with the system—it won't explode; but, save your work often

How to get started?

- Keyword search
- Choose a book that is relevant to your topic, click on the title
- Look at the subject headings: subject designator, person as subject
- Follow subject headings
- Note that not all books that cover a topic have a relevant subject heading; subject headings for the same things can vary

Useful limits for an initial search

- Sort by date—descending: focus on the most recent books
- Limit by language: eliminate non-English works
- Limit by number of libraries: focus on the most widely read books

How to pick the best books: key: look at the publisher

Most recent and up-to-date; scholarly, peer-reviewed

- University presses; commercial academic presses (Brill, Brepols, etc.: mostly Dutch, German); avoid confessional (religious) presses for the most part