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Writing a Research Paper

I've never actually written a paper about writing a paper, so this is a bit awkward for me. I've never really looked at the process I go through to write it; I typically write the paper without much thought as to how I am going about it. I suppose, though, that I do have a process I follow when assigned a paper.

The absolute first thing I would do if assigned this paper is to find the poem in question. The first place I would search for it would be online, as that would be the easiest place to find it. My search terms on Google would be "The Garden of Love." Once I find the best website for what I need, I'll read the actual poem. It's not very long, so that part shouldn't be too terribly difficult. I would then reread it to see if I missed anything or just to get a better idea of what the poem is about. I would then scan the poem to find a really specific topic which I can use to make a good argument that will carry through the required number of pages and possibly beyond if I felt the need to pursue it further.

The next step would be to go to the library and see if I can find any more sources that are up-to-date and/or useful for my topic. Books would be preferable, since they are easier to cite, but online journals would probably be my best bet for a new opinion. I'm not sure exactly what databases I would use, but some good bets would be Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, InfoTrac, and LexisNexis. I would most likely search for "The Garden of Love" as my first entry. Most of the sources that appear would probably not work with my topic, so I will be required to narrow it down to something like "love in 'The Garden of Love'" to get a clearer focus for my paper. It might also be helpful to find a book from the time the poem was actually written that would give me a different take on how it was viewed during that time period. I could possibly use this to compare and contrast some differing views on the poem's views of love and the toll it takes on the world.

Once I have my sources, I would read through them to make sure they actually relate to my topic as I have worded it. Sometimes I will find a similar topic in one of my sources, but it doesn't quite match up with my idea of what I am trying to discuss with the paper. If I find a source like this, I'll head back to the library and look through the topic again to see if I can find a source that more closely relates to my topic. If even that proves fruitless, I'll look back through the source and see if I can find anything that I can use to support my argument. If I do find something, I'll just quote from it one time, since it doesn't really quite fit in with the rest of the paper topic.

Once I have some sources, I would begin writing the paper. I might skip the introduction, because it is difficult to come up with a thesis when you are not really sure how your topic will turn out in the end. I would start off with a general overview of my topic and why it is important to the poem, and then I would go deeper and start in with the nitty-gritty stuff that really makes it a good paper. I'll flip through my sources for good quotes and try to work them into the paper as best as possible. In the conclusion, I would try to bring my argument to a concise end with a statement that sums up my argument and brings it to a close. This is the point where I would go back and write the introduction, as I now have a better understanding of my topic and what I plan to let the reader know about it.

The Works Cited always gives me trouble, as I am never quite sure how to cite certain sources. The online sources are typically the worst, as the handbook does not really give a clear indication as to how to cite some of these databases. I would then hopefully (if I have enough time) review the paper for any major errors and correct them as needed. I would then browse the Works Cited page to make sure the sources are organized according to MLA standards, and if they are not, I will correct them. After I've completed all of this, I would print it out or email it in order to turn it in.

This process of research somewhat follows the ideas put forth by Nicholas Carr in his article, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Carr mentions using book sources for research, but he says that it is losing favor against the vast and unlimited databases available through the internet, or, more specifically, Google. I disagree that it is becoming obsolete, as books are sometimes the best place to turn for specific topics. For example, if I wanted information about an event in the

Civil War, the original text would be the best place to find the information. I always look for some books that I can use in my research, even if they are available on the internet. It is much easier to read ink-and-paper publications than a computer monitor. To change from using original ink-and-paper texts to exclusively online materials will not happen overnight as Carr seems to think it might. This is a gradual change that is constantly being rejected by many individuals.

I plan to be a writer at some point in the future, and that means I plan to publish books on paper. If it gets transferred to the internet, that works as well. However, people still love reading books and I highly doubt that will change so drastically that internet will be the major distributor of knowledge for research any time soon. Books still hold a special place in the hearts of everyone, and that is not likely to change for quite some time.

Works Cited

Carr, Nicholas. "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" <u>TheAtlantic.com</u>. July/Aug 2008

      <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google>.