USING THE INTERNET TO LOOK FOR A RESEARCH TOPIC

Your instructor assigns a 7-10 page research paper. Let's say the subject is music. Whether or not you've been given a topic, you'll still need to narrow the focus. Where do you start? Skimming tables of contents of a few books about music may give you too few topic ideas; typing "music" into Google gives you more than 13 million!

The best place to start the research process may be an **Internet subject directory**, which is a Web page database. Why?

- It provides a list of subtopics, so you don't have to think of ideas or terms.
- It provides research paths; you explore your choice of topics by clicking through linked layers of information.
- It provides high-quality information; many directories (like those recommended below) are compiled by librarians and academic experts who select and evaluate Web pages for accuracy, value, academic level, and accessibility.

Check out the "user-friendly" subject directories below:
(Note that each offers a slightly different approach to searching a subject.)

1. **Librarian's Index to the Internet <www.lii.org>**
Clicking "music" on the homepage under "Arts, Crafts, & Humanities" takes you to a page containing 72 music subtopics; concise, readable, and accurate descriptions of each link take the guesswork out of searching.

2. The Internet Public Library <www.ipl.org>
To find information on classical music from the homepage, go to "Subject Collections," and then click and hold "Arts & Humanities" to get a drop-down menu, from which you'll click "Fine Arts." For other types, click "Entertainment" under "Subject Collections" and click "Music" from the drop-down menu.

3. BUBL LINK/5:15 <http://bubl.ac.uk>

To find music from the homepage, click "Creative Arts," which links to an extensive list of subtopic links to resources for "music" as well as other fine arts. Descriptions and simple terms make it easy to find information on the Internet.

Here are some strategies for using these subject directories:

- Click on a homepage subject category to get a list of subtopics.

- Scan this list for topic ideas, and click on a topic of interest to get a page of linked resource options.

- Scan titles and read descriptions of linked resources; then click what you like, or return to the topic page and make another selection.

- Try another directory if you don't find what you want in the first one; content varies from directory to directory.

- Know that directories also categorize differently (see directions for searching "music"). Bookmark worthwhile pages you find while exploring--you may have trouble finding them again.

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