

# A&S Research for Beginners

Teleri the Well-Prepared

Battle on the Bay

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## Overview

- Why research is awesome!
- The research process
- Documenting your process

## Research = Awesome!

- Research - the entire process from project idea to final product
- Includes scholarship/learning, crafting/writing/doing, artistic creation
- Exercises:
  - Imagination! (What shall I do?)
  - Analysis, pattern matching, treasure hunting! (Finding sources, putting the pieces together)
  - Invention, creativity, artistry (Filling in the gaps, talent and skill at executing the project)
  - Satisfaction of a job well done!
- It's a process of self-guided learning. Whatever you want to know, however much (or little) that you care to know about it. Do what you like, stop when you're ready
- What's not to like?

## The Research Process: 4 Parts

- VERY IMPORTANT: Research's sidekick - the logbook
  - Notebook, sketchpad, scratchpad, Word doc, weblog, journal... whatever.
  - Record your research efforts/thoughts/habits **as you do them**.
  - Especially record decisions/tradeoffs, challenges and efforts to meet them, successes
  - It will pay dividends in the future. *Trust me*.
- Goal-Setting
  - What do you want to do?
  - What's important to you for this project? What does it have to do besides "be authentic"?
    - Meet a schedule, stay under budget
    - Not cause an allergic reaction, be a flattering color, incorporate baronial arms, fit in your car, set up in under 30 minutes, not poison your kids/pets, win a competition... Anything else?
    - It is OKAY to trade off authenticity to meet these goals.
- Information Search
  - DO NOT START YOUR PROJECT YET
  - NO, NOT EVEN BUYING MATERIALS
  - Hit the library or the Internet
    - Use keywords, try synonyms and jargon of the field as you learn it
    - Good sites: are by authoritative sources, have citations, show you the sources that back up their claims
    - Bad sites: speak in sweeping generalities, have no citations or appeal to "everybody knows," present emotionally-resonant and Romantic tales as historical facts without source or citation

- If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.
  - If you did already start your project:
    - Document honestly. What inspired you to do what you did?
    - What have you learned via your belated information search?
    - What would you do differently next time?
    - This is honest and shows intellectual growth
    - Bluffing the reader just induces rage.
  - If you learn halfway through your project that you're doing it wrong:
    - You don't have to stop and start over (but you can if that's what you want)
    - As above, be honest: I started this project under my best state of knowledge and have since learned new things that change how I think. But it's too late to alter this project, so I'll apply these ideas to the next one.
    - That's how we learn and advance knowledge!
- Process/Practice/Method
  - Do your A&S thing!
  - Consider if you want to practice certain techniques before attempting them on your final piece.
  - No right answer, just think about whether or not you'll be mad at yourself if your learning curve is showing.
- Evaluation
  - What did you do well?
  - What do you want to improve?

#### Documentation

- This format can be shrunk or expanded as necessary
- Mirrors the research process
- Introduction -> Tell the reader your goals.
- Background -> The most important historical or other facts you learned in your Information Search that the reader needs to evaluate your work
  - You wrote a sonnet. What is a sonnet form supposed to be like?
  - What are the important characteristics of this kind of dress that make it different from other dresses?
  - In other words, what was your target?
- Method/Process/Project-Specific Doings
  - The steps you took in making your artifact.
  - For short documentation, pick out the most critical decisions and challenges that shaped the project
  - Long documentation can be an illustrated step-by-step how-to guide if you want
- Results and Conclusions -> Evaluation
  - Results are what you did, conclusions are what you learned.
  - It's okay (even good) to include the things you didn't do well
    - Shows that you know what you're talking about
    - People won't offer helpful advice that you already know
    - People may offer advice on your actual unsolved problems...
    - ...or things you didn't even know *were* problems
- References
  - The sources you used during your research
  - If you read a medieval text, in translation, quoted on a webpage:

- Medieval Author, "Title of Work." Translated by Translator (if known), [publication information of translation if any]. On "Website Title," Website Author (if known), URL, accessed on (date).
- There are style guide you can use, but the important thing
- Make clear where you got your information
- If you didn't read the dead-tree copy, don't make it sound like you did