Using Citations to Find More Scholarship

Once you find a scholarly article on your topic you can use it to uncover even more research by using the citations or references.

Some of the information in a scholarly article comes from the original research within the article, or the cogent argument put forth by the scholar. The rest is provided by previous scholarship. For good scholarship the scholar needs to provide a source for every fact, every statistic, every theory, and every assertion made in the article. This allows the peers doing the peer review to double-check the work to correct for honest errors, or challenge differing interpretations, or locate mistakes. It also allows those building on that work to locate research to inform their own inquiry.

Those citations are there for you to use. The citations serve as a roadmap to more research done on the topic on which the scholar is writing.

One reason some of your professors are so adamant about getting your citations correct is because accurate citations are instrumental in creating a high-quality body of knowledge.

If the citation is for a book check the library’s online catalog. If it is not in our collection, you can request to borrow it through interlibrary loan.
If the citation is for an article, follow these steps:

1.) search for the journal in Ejournals (be sure to check the date of the article against the date range available). If the library owns the journal you will find it through the Ejuornals search (if we do not, request it through Interlibrary Loan).

2.) click on the appropriate link,

3.) search for the title of the article (using the whole title, part of the title, keywords, or the name of the author).

If the article is a little dated and you would like to locate something more recent, take the article you are using and search for it in Google Scholar (scholar.google.com).* Locate the article in the results and use the ‘cited by’ link underneath to search for scholarship that has used that article since it was published. This may not always lead to a more recent article on your topic, but it is a good research strategy to utilize.

Through this process of following the network of information created by the citations you will soon have an idea of the work that has already been done to address your research question.

*For more help using Google Scholar see the step-by-step guide for using Google Scholar at the Introduction to Library Research guide.