

# HOW TO RESEARCH LD TOPICS

by

Scott Robinson and Jason Baldwin

L

D

D

e

b

a

t

e

If you want to do Lincoln-Douglas debate well, you must research. Many LD arguments contain among their premises empirical claims (claims about how the world is, was, or will be) which require expert support. Moreover, the best arguments on virtually any LD resolution have already been developed by scholars writing in books and journals, and you must research to understand their conclusions. Fortunately, research is also an invaluable skill which will be required and rewarded in college and in many of the careers debaters are likely

compile a list of words and phrases (“keywords”) that you will use to search library catalogs and databases. The resources you will confront in a typical library are enormous, and all but a tiny fraction of them are irrelevant to your topic. You must use the library’s catalogs (probably electronic, possibly card) to find that tiny fraction of useful resources, and you will need keywords to use the catalogs.

Think of a library catalog as if it were the index of a very big book. You know the book contains information you need, but the information is confined to only a few pages. Those pages will be listed under one or a few headings in the index, but you are unlikely to find the proper heading on your first try. The indexer of the book doesn’t classify its contents exactly the way you would. To use the index successfully, you must be flexible and resourceful. You must be able to generate many synonyms and different combinations of words related to the subject you’re researching in order to find the index headings which will lead you to the pages you need.

**...“Research work begins before you arrive at the library of your choice...”**

to pursue.

Unfortunately, debate is the only place to learn research in many high school curricula. And many students are (it seems) now led to believe that surfing the internet is an acceptable substitute for traditional library research. This is a dangerous lie, but it is not our subject; we will take for granted that library research is an essential skill for LD students and for aspiring scholars in all fields.

Our goal here is to guide LD students through the stages of a library research process we have refined with many generations of debaters (including ourselves). This process is ideal for tackling LD resolutions, and some of the details are adapted to the particulars of our event; yet the basic format applies to any large research project. This article is the second of two on research in LD. The first, published in last month’s *Rostrum*, addressed coaches on how to *teach* research. This article addresses students on how to *do* research. Each article is self-contained, and we have repeated information from the earlier article below where we thought it would be helpful to students.

## I. Presearch

Research work begins before you arrive at the library of your choice. Your most important task is to

If you try to generate this sort of keyword list for an LD topic while you’re actually in the library searching their catalogs, you will probably experience a form of “researcher’s block,” and you will almost certainly overlook important words and ideas which will come back to haunt you after you have left the library. Instead of wasting valuable time *in* the library thinking of all the topic-relevant terms to look up, start a running list of keywords *before* you go to the library.

Ideally, you can brainstorm with your teammates about possible search terms on the resolution. These terms may be words and phrases from the resolution itself, but you should also include synonyms, authors, historical events, and anything else related to the topic which you might want to look up in the library. It’s a good idea to consult your parents or some older teachers who may remember relevant examples of resolutorial conflict which occurred before your time.

Do *not* try to decide which specific arguments you want to research at this stage; it is *foolish* to choose your case arguments until you have surveyed the range of arguments made by authors knowledgeable about your topic. Your goal now is simply to compile the terms that will lead you to resources in the general area you are researching.

Here is an example of an initial keyword list on the 2003 NFL National Tournament resolution, that “Reha-

bilitation ought to be valued above punishment in the U.S. criminal justice system”: rehabilitation, punishment, criminal justice system, deterrence, retribution, Immanuel Kant, utilitarianism, recidivism, prisons, Michel Foucault, desert, penology, freedom/determinism. This list does not represent the full range of sources and ideas you would ultimately confront on this resolution. Rather, these are the kind of terms you might be able to generate before you researched the topic, and if you used them to search a library’s catalogs, you would quickly find many resources relevant to the resolution.

Besides compiling your keyword list, you should also care for several details before you set out for a library. You should try to find the best library available for your work. A large city or county library is better than a small high school or community library; a college or university library is better yet. Chances are that you live within an hour’s drive of a solid university research library. If you do, it is well worth your time to designate a Saturday when you (and perhaps several friends) can travel there together. But whatever library you plan to use, you should call ahead to be sure they are open when you want to go and also to see if there are any restrictions on who may use the library. If you have easy internet access, you may want to do some preliminary catalog searching (see below) before you arrive at the library.

When you are ready to go, be sure you have your keyword list, some notepaper, a dark pen, your library card, and money for photocopies. You should expect to make at least 50-100 copies, and most libraries charge \$.10 or so for each one.

## II. Library Day One: Preliminary Research

Your goal on this first library trip is to leave with several photocopied chapters or articles relevant to your topic. Very rarely will you find a book by a single author which is relevant in its entirety to an LD resolution. For example, consider the possible 2004 resolution that “In the U.S., the use of race as a deciding factor in college admissions is just.” Even if you expand the scope of your research to include affirmative action generally, you will find few books written strictly on the *justice* of affirmative action. Books on affirmative action may have a chapter or two on its justice, and collections of essays on justice may have a reading or two on affirmative action. (We are assuming what should be obvious: The claim that affirmative action is just or unjust is much more specific than the claim that it is good or bad, desirable or undesirable.)

Moreover, if you did find an entire book on the justice of affirmative action in U.S. college admissions, you would probably discover that the core of the book’s argument was contained in one or two of its chapters. This is because most academic monographs (books by a single author on a single subject) begin life as a series of separate articles in academic journals. Professors are under pressure to produce books, so they frequently cobble together their old journal articles on a common theme into a “new” book. Your research time is usually best spent homing in on just those sections of a book which directly address the topic you’re debating.

But how do you find those chapters and articles? Begin by searching the library’s electronic book catalog using terms from your keyword list. If you are searching with very general keywords (e.g., “capital punishment,” “foreign aid,” “immigration”), use the catalog’s title-search function. Title searching will yield a manageable list of results which are closely related to your subject.

If you are searching with more specific keywords (e.g., “reverse discrimination,” “nuclear deterrence,” “deforestation”), a title search may turn up very few results. In that case, try a keyword or subject search. These searches usually turn up many, many items, most of them irrelevant. Of course, if you have names of authors on your keyword list, you can find them using an author search.

As you scroll through the results of these various searches, you are looking for book titles which sound promising. When you see a promising title, do two things. First, jot down the beginning of the title’s call number. You do not need to worry about all the decimals at the end of a Library of Congress call number; if the number is “JC 4712.867 R72 1997,” you need only write down “JC 4712.” When you come to another relevant title, write down its basic call number if it’s different from those you’ve already noted, or put a check next to the number it shares with a previous title (a large library will have many books under “JC 4712”).

Second, read the complete catalog listing to see under what subjects the book has officially been classified. When you see a subject listing which is clearly relevant to your resolution, add it to your keyword list. You can then search the catalog using the same headings the catalogers used.

With most LD topics, you will discover that three or four areas of the library have high concentrations of relevant books (i.e., call numbers with many checks). For example, on the aforementioned affirmative action topic, books on race, justice, constitutional law, and higher education will be shelved in four different areas of the library, but all of these are important subjects in the debate.

Notice what you are not doing during this initial catalog search: You are not writing down information on specific “must find” books and authors. Instead, you are identifying the sections of the library where the relevant books reside. Do not spend more than 30 or 40 minutes on this initial catalog search. It is very easy to waste lots of time on a computer trying to complete the perfect search; do not be tempted. You will do your specific searching in the stacks where books are shelved.

Now you can head to the main stacks to look for books in the call-number areas you have listed from your catalog search. If JC 4712 turned up many promising search hits, peruse *all* the titles you find at JC 4712. Do not pull them all down from the shelf; just scan the spine of each book and pull down only those titles which seem possibly relevant to you. Some of the titles you find will be familiar from your catalog search, but other important books will be new discoveries. Also be sure to scan a few books in the adjoining call-number sections, since these are likely to be on related subjects.

You should perform a mini-search of each book as you pull it off the shelf. Look at its table of contents to see if any of the chapters sound useful. Flip quickly through the book to be sure that it is not simply a collection of outdated statistics or personal anecdotes. You do not need to pass final judgment on the book at this point, but you can save yourself (and librarians) a lot of work by discovering that most of the titles that look promising on the shelf are actually useless for your purposes. If a book is clearly irrelevant, put it back exactly where you found it. (Never, however, reshelve books which you have taken out of the stacks to examine with more care. Leave books you actually use on the tables where you use them; librarians prefer to reshelve these books themselves.)

When you have retrieved what appear to you to be the relevant books from a given section, take them to a table and look

through them more carefully. At this point you are deciding what, if anything, to photocopy from each book. Begin by skimming the book's preface or introduction. Here you will usually find a clear statement of the problems the author is addressing and her basic position or thesis. Often these short sections also contain a chapter-by-chapter summary of the book's contents. This summary, in combination with the table of contents, can help you determine which chapters are the best candidates for photocopying. Although you are mostly looking for arguments for or against your resolution, do not neglect chapters which provide historical overviews of your subject. Understanding the historical origins of a controversy will increase your credibility as a speaker and may also suggest some of the strongest arguments.

You should turn to any chapters or articles which look promising and give them a quick flip-through before committing to copy them. Do not attempt to read the chapter! Instead, read the chapter's first and last paragraphs (here the author will likely be previewing and summarizing the chapter contents), and flip quickly through the chapter, noting any subheadings and reading occasional sentences to check for topic-related language. Any charts or visuals can also help to give you a quick sense of what the chapter is really about. You will often find that a chapter with a great-sounding title is a dud, and you will also sometimes find that an irrelevant-sounding chapter contains a superb subsection on some facet of your topic.

Finally, check the book's index for keywords from your list. Entries with spans of continuous pages (e.g., "184-88") are more promising than entries with single or only scattered pages (e.g., "117, 162, 205").

When you locate any section of a book you wish to copy, mark the place with a slip of paper. Do not dog-ear pages of library books. Once you have accumulated several good sections of books, head to the copy machines.

Photocopying for research purposes is not as simple as it might seem. It is easy to go home with flawed or incomplete copies. Begin by copying the front and back of the book's title page, and also any page which provides information about the author's background and qualifications. You must be able to provide complete bibliographical information if you quote an author in a debate. If you do not know (and state!) the qualifications of your authors, you might as well be quoting your little brother.

On the first page of actual text you copy, check the margins of the copy to see that nothing is cut off along any edges. If you have any doubts, shrink the copy size to 92% or so; this will make it easy to copy without checking each page as it comes out. Also check the darkness of the machine and adjust as necessary.

In addition to the publication information and chapter text, you should also *always* copy any endnotes matched to the chapter and any bibliography or list of references at the end of the book. This information will be vital to your future research and will often yield better evidence than the book from which you originally take it. After you have copied the material you need from each book, sit down and flip through each set of copies to be sure you have not skipped anything (like author information) or missed any pages in the chapters you intended to copy. It is very easy to turn two pages instead of one at the copy machine, and it *really* stinks to go back to the library to find a single missing page.

At this point, you have achieved the goal of the first library trip: you have found and copied relevant chapters or essays on the resolution. Your next work will be done at home as you read

through the sections you have copied. But before we get there, we should call your attention to several types of library resources beyond the standard monograph (book by a single author).

First and most obviously are periodicals—magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. The standard library catalog will not search periodicals. It will tell you if the library subscribes to a particular periodical, but you will have to use a more specialized (and probably web-based) database such as FirstSearch, JSTOR, Infotrac, or EBSCOhost to locate specific articles. The skills needed to search these databases are basically the same needed to search an electronic library catalog. Note that many electronic databases do not track journal articles going back more than 10 or 15 years. You may want to search the old-fashioned printed versions of the *Philosopher's Index*, *Humanities Index*, or *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* if these are available in your library. (We have often found better articles using these paper resources than their faster online counterparts.)

Whereas your search for books used the catalog only to find promising areas of the library, periodical searching uses the catalog to find specific articles. When you locate an article you'd like to retrieve, you will have to figure out in what format, if any, it's available. Different libraries receive different periodicals in different formats. More recent issues are probably shelved loose in one area. Older issues will be bound and shelved separately or may be on microfilm or microfiche. Some periodicals may be available only online through special library subscriptions; for example, articles in journals indexed by JSTOR can be printed from .pdf files.

Usually periodical articles relevant to a debate topic will be scattered among various journals and magazines in several disciplines (e.g., law, political science, philosophy). But sometimes you will find a specific journal which regularly publishes articles relevant to a topic. For example, on the past LD resolution that "The possession of nuclear weapons is immoral," the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has published many pertinent articles. In the case of such a periodical, it may be worth it to flip through the tables of contents of all the issues owned by the library, most of which will probably be bound (four issues per year compose one volume for most scholarly journals).

The library's reference collection is a second type of non-monograph resource you should not overlook. Reference departments house a variety of subject-specific dictionaries, encyclopedias, and bibliographies which may contain useful articles and further research leads. For example, on the aforementioned rehabilitation-versus-punishment topic, the *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice* contains valuable articles on—you guessed it—"Rehabilitation" and "Punishment." Applicable to many LD resolutions are the articles found in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, and the *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*. The articles in such reference volumes give an overview of major arguments on both sides of an issue, usually written by an important scholar in the field. They also provide a bibliography of essential books and articles which you can use to guide your further research. They are one of the best sources of fair definitions, since they are written to provide authoritative, evenhanded introductions of their subjects. In fact, you may want to start your shelf-work in the reference section, after you've performed your initial catalog search but before you start pulling books from the main stacks.

A third type of non-monograph source is the edited anthology. An anthology is simply a collection of articles and essays by

different authors which have been published as a single book. Some anthologies contain original contributions, not published elsewhere, while other anthologies pull together previously published articles. In a sense, anthologies are not a separate resource, because you will encounter them on the shelves mixed in with all the other books. You can treat an essay in an anthology just as you would a chapter in a monograph.

But in another sense, anthologies can be the best possible resources. The editor of an anthology has saved you the trouble of finding and skimming separate books by all the contributing authors. For example, if you confronted the past LD resolution that “Government limits on the individual’s right to bear arms in the United States are justified,” you would certainly want to research the Second Amendment. You could spend a full afternoon in a law library hunting down individual journal articles and court decisions, or you could look at a copy of the anthology *Gun Control and the Constitution* edited by Robert J. Cottrol. Cottrol has gathered several major Supreme Court decisions plus the most important law journal articles on all sides of the issue together in a single book.

If you find an anthology closely related to your topic, you will probably want to copy several essays from it. Be sure that for each essay you get full bibliographic information for that essay as well as for the anthology as a whole. In particular, do not confuse the editor of the anthology (whose name will appear on the book’s spine and title page) with the author of the essay (whose name will appear in the table of contents and on the first page of the essay).

In addition to scholarly anthologies on specific topics, you should be aware of two other types of anthologies which sometimes come in handy. The first are series such as *Opposing Viewpoints* or (better) *Taking Sides*. These series collect current articles from popular periodicals on controversial issues. You may be able to find a book in such a series relevant to your topic. These books tend to pair up authors against each other in a simple pro-and-con format, much like a debate round. The downside is that the articles included are usually short and not very deep. However, there are some exceptions, and you may also be able to get leads for further research from bibliographies in such anthologies.

The second type of non-scholarly anthology is a collection of readings on a variety of controversial moral and political questions edited into a textbook. Courses on modern ethical dilemmas are a common offering at most colleges, and publishers have provided anthologies specifically geared to those courses. Because such anthologies cover many issues, they rarely have more than three or four articles on a single subject. But they are usually substantive readings which are excellent sources for debate arguments. Capital punishment, abortion, affirmative action, and economic inequality are examples of the topics often represented in such books. Two examples of such anthologies are *Ethics in Practice* (edited by Hugh LaFollette) and *Morality in Practice* (edited by James P. Sterba). You can find most of them at Library of Congress call number BJ 1012. It’s a good idea to check these anthologies for readings on each new debate topic.

### III. Reading

As you read the chapters, essays, and articles you have found on your first library trip, your top priority should be to learn about the topic you are debating. You do not need to search immediately for the arguments you will use in rounds. If historical overviews or reference articles are among your finds, begin by

reading those sources. They will give you the background to understand better the more concentrated arguments you will read elsewhere.

Of course, arguments and evidence are the ultimate goals of your research, and you should be alert to their presence from the beginning. This is not an article on how to read argumentative prose or how to spot good evidence, so we will not dwell on those important subjects. However, we do offer one warning: Be careful to distinguish an author’s own arguments and conclusions from arguments and conclusions he summarizes but rejects. Academic writers often take great care and many pages to explain the views of their opponents. If you were to read only a single randomly selected paragraph or page of many academic books, you might credit the author with views exactly opposite to those she really holds.

To make things even more difficult, academics rarely trumpet their conclusions with clear topic sentences; their “signposting” is very subtle. Often their true positions become clear only in light of a careful reading (or several careful readings!) of entire chapters or articles.

We have heard countless students quote authors as support for positions the authors do not really hold. Most of these students were not being *deliberately* unethical, but they were being unethical nonetheless. They had failed to read their sources carefully, and so they were unwittingly misrepresenting those sources to their own advantage. Again, prefaces and introductions of books and the concluding paragraphs of chapters are usually good places to look for clear statements of an author’s own conclusions. But there is no reliable substitute for careful reading, and you are responsible to quote sources honestly and accurately.

Beyond reading for background, arguments, and evidence, you should be reading this first batch of chapters with an eye to further research. If you found the very best sources on your first library trip, you probably just got lucky. But the sources you did find can point you to the best sources, if you will let them.

You should keep four separate lists as you read. First, you should list the major arguments you find. Second, you should list relevant-sounding books and articles which are cited by the authors you are reading. (You will need the chapter’s endnotes and/or bibliography to find these other sources; thus the importance of copying them.) When the same book or article is cited by several of your sources, you know it is likely to be especially important or authoritative. Here you are relying on experts in the field rather than hit-or-miss catalog searching to guide your further research. Third, list the most important authors on your subject. These will often, but not always, be the people who wrote the books and articles on your second list. They are the authors mentioned most frequently by name in the sources you have found so far. If everyone writing on your subject feels compelled to defend or attack the views of (say) Peter Singer, you had better get a firsthand look at Peter Singer’s arguments. Fourth, list the “camps” you discover. A camp is a set of arguments promoted together, generally by a well-defined set of authors. Identifying camps will start to give you a sense of what arguments can fit together to create a unified case position.

### IV. Library Day Two:

#### Topic-Specific Research

To tap into the best resources on your topic, you *must* plan to make further library trips beyond the initial search described

above. Only after reading those initial sources and compiling your argument, source, author, and camp lists are you in a position to research your topic knowledgeably.

For now, you can set aside your argument and camp lists. Your goal on this library trip is to track down items from your source and author lists. You are no longer performing general catalog searches; your searches should be fast and specific—author and title searches rather than subject or keyword searches. You should probably expect to find more periodical sources on this trip than you did on your first one.

Your procedure for reviewing and copying sources is the same as on the first library day. Check prefaces, tables of contents, and indexes, and quickly skim chapters, to help you decide what is worth copying and what is not. *Always* copy the endnotes and bibliographies of your sources, and always copy complete publication information, including author qualifications.

You should process this material in the same way you processed the material from your first trip. Supplement and refine your four lists as you read these additional sources. You may need to repeat this “second” research day several times as you continue to add new sources and authors to your list. You are more likely to find interesting and quotable evidence at this point; if you expect to produce briefs from your research, now is the time to start. You should also have a much surer sense of the strongest arguments on your topic and how they relate to each other.

### **V. Library Day Three: In-Depth Investigation**

If you completed the first two phases of library research carefully, you now have a solid basic grasp of the topic you will be debating. Up to this point, you needed to keep a very open mind, reading whatever seemed important based on your preliminary brainstorming or on the opinions of the authors you discovered. If you had committed yourself to certain arguments before completing both of those earlier library cycles, you would have chosen in ignorance. Now you have earned the right to make informed decisions about which arguments you want to pursue as your own.

You have been compiling two lists—the argument list and the camp list—which you have not yet used in the library. Use these lists to generate a new keyword list. This list is similar to the one you created before your first library trip, but this time, the list is based on your choices about which arguments you want to pursue and informed by your understanding of the terminology of the field. You are trying to become an expert on the arguments you will actually use in debate rounds.

When you use this new keyword list to search the library’s catalogs and periodical databases, you are no longer looking for general areas of the library. You are searching for specific books and articles on particular arguments. This means you should write down complete titles and authors with call numbers (for books) or volume and page numbers (for journals). When you locate these items in the stacks, you can scrutinize them more carefully before copying them. You are familiar enough with the topic area and with the basic shape of the arguments to be able to judge the value of a given source for your purposes. Perhaps you are looking specifically for the way to refute a certain objection to an argument, or for current statistics to back up a crucial empirical premise in an argument. You can skim potential sources before copying to see if they answer the questions you are now asking. As always, you are looking for complete chapters, essays, and articles to copy, and as

always, you should be sure to copy the bibliographic and publication information, not just the text in which you are interested.

Once you have read up on the specific arguments of your choice, you are in a good position to develop your cases. Because you want to craft a coherent position and not just a laundry list of unrelated or even incompatible points, you should use your list of camps to see which arguments are frequently discussed together in the literature. You need a cluster of arguments (including offensive and defensive arguments) for the case and rebuttals on each side. Be wary of combining arguments which are never combined by authors you have read. If it has never occurred to experts in the field to use certain arguments together, this may be because the arguments rely on contradictory premises or even different understandings of major terms and concepts. Such inconsistencies can wreak havoc in a debate case.

Your team may have its own norms about the formatting and use of evidence. This article is not about those subjects, but we will say briefly that you should be scrupulously accurate in cases and rebuttals when describing what your sources say. Do not exaggerate what a source claims or proves, and do not adopt the pompous habit of referring to every quoted assertion as someone’s “analysis.” Never quote or paraphrase a source of which you do not have a photocopy on hand. Evidence can be challenged, and if yours is, you must have it available for inspection. Always include the author’s qualifications before reading a quotation; otherwise the words you quote have no more credibility than your own words.

If you have researched as thoroughly as we have recommended, you will know much more about the resolution than most of your opponents know. You will have encountered most of the best arguments on both sides already, and you will know how to attack and defend them. You will be able to speak knowledgeably about the history of your subject and to explain professional jargon and concepts using language your audience can understand. You will have expert support for most of the controversial claims you make in debate rounds, and you will be able to recognize when an opponent is making an empirically unfounded claim or misrepresenting a major author in the field. These are tremendous advantages. They will not by themselves guarantee debate success, but they greatly improve your chances.

The temptation to stop researching once competition on a topic begins is very strong. But if you want to be the best debater you can be, you must resist this temptation.

### **VI. Library Day Four: Reactive Research**

After the first three library “days,” you are well acquainted with the major authors and arguments on your resolution, and you know the arguments you are using in great detail. But knowing your arguments is not enough. You must know your opponents’ arguments as well.

Reactive research starts at the first tournament (or maybe even your first practice rounds) on a topic. During the competition, you need to make a final list: the reaction list. This list includes every important argument and source that was not on your original lists. No matter how good your pre-competition research efforts have been, you will almost always find that other debaters have found arguments you have not anticipated. Even if you do not think those arguments are strong, you should plan to research them further. Arguments which sound weak in the mouth of a weak opponent may prove much stronger in the original sources,

which may in turn lead you to further sources and arguments.

You need to collect as much information as possible on all the new arguments you hear to help you research them before your next tournament. Take careful notes on evidence during speeches, and talk to people between rounds to learn about their research. Sometimes it is worth asking for source information in cross-examination to help you track down the original. (As icing on the cake, such source questions sometimes elicit embarrassingly ignorant responses from opponents.)

Armed with your reaction list, return to the library and proceed as you did on the second and third “days”: look up specific authors and titles when possible, and selectively track down sources on unfamiliar arguments. Again, you want to copy relevant chapters and articles.

As you read this material, find out whether it was quoted correctly by your opponents. Distressingly often, you will find that an opponent misrepresents an original source. Even students who do not blatantly misrepresent a source will often quote it without understanding the source’s obvious weaknesses. (This danger is especially acute for students who buy all of their evidence through the mail and never examine original texts for themselves.) If a source is making empirical claims, study the method by which those claims were derived; such claims often sound much less impressive if you understand (and can explain!) the facts behind them. Again, pay attention to the notes and bibliography where these authors acknowledge their own sources and the writings of their critics.

Continue reactive research as long as you are competing on a topic. You may even want to pursue long-term reactive research on some arguments after a resolution has expired. Philosophical

positions which might be applied to many resolutions but which are unfamiliar to you are good candidates for such research.

### Conclusion

We have outlined a very structured and specific strategy for library research. This strategy has worked well for LD students of all experience levels, and it includes practice in many of the research skills any high school student should acquire in preparation for college and beyond. But you will obviously have to adapt this process to your schedule and local circumstances. Different stages of the process may be more or less difficult and lengthy depending on the resolution. Different libraries will lend themselves to different research emphases. Your level of debate interest and other academic demands may lead you to adopt a more or less ambitious version of our pattern. However, we hope the pattern provides a useful starting place. Ultimately, library research is a skill learned by doing. If you are active, persistent, and careful, you can become a strong researcher.

*(Scott Robinson is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Texas at Dallas. You can find his texts on LD at [www.oneparadigm.com](http://www.oneparadigm.com).*

*Jason Baldwin is a doctoral student in Philosophy at Notre Dame. Many of his past Rostrum articles are available on the NFL’s online archive. Together, Robinson and Baldwin oversee the LD curriculum of the Kentucky National Debate Institute ([www.kndi.org](http://www.kndi.org)).*

## THE ROSTRUM WANTS YOU!



Submit

- Ideas on Coaching Techniques?
  - Strategies for Research?
  - Interesting Team Stories?
- Tremendous Team Photos?
  - Thoughtful Memories?

Email Sandy at [nflrostrum@centurytel.net](mailto:nflrostrum@centurytel.net)