



Scholarly Reading Guide: Reading Bibliographies

What Are Bibliographies?

Bibliographies contain rich and complex information, not just lists of sources. They often reflect both the history and present scope of the field. Academic articles are usually connected to previous research, which means the author of an article typically references other academic work. Since many authors of academic articles rely on this previous research in multiple ways, getting to know previous work helps you understand how an author arrived at their current research.

Focusing on Authors for Understanding Bibliographies

- If your professor or class mentions the importance of an author in your field, one tip is reading that person's academic resume, or Curriculum Vitae (CV). Many researchers have their CV available for public viewing at the institutions where they work or on their own websites.
- Scan an author's CV to see what exactly they published and when. This information can help you see the big picture of how certain seminal authors have shaped and contributed to your field. Viewing authors' CVs help identify their coauthors. Knowing this may lead you to other research worth reading.
- Read the authors' names listed on the editorial boards of journals. This scholarly reading strategy can help you understand how they may be important in your field.

By scanning a bibliography, the reader can quickly gather other helpful sources and names of authors that might be of interest.

This list of sources comes from an actual bibliography that contains more than ninety sources. There often is not time to read all sources to determine which are the most important to your research.

Scanning for Names

Look at the bibliography excerpt. Are there any repeated names? The last name "Prior" is repeated several times in the bibliography. Therefore, we can assume from scanning this bibliography that Prior is an influential author whose articles are worth looking at.

- Pennycook, A. (2016). Posthumanist Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, amw016.
- Prior, P. (2013). 11. Combining Phenomenological and Sociohistoric Frameworks for Studying Literate Practices: Some Implications of Deborah Brandt's Methodological Trajectory. *Literacy, Economy, and Power: Writing and Research after "Literacy in American Lives"*, 166.
- Prior, P. (2015). Writing, literate activity, semiotic remediation. *Writing (s) at the Crossroads: The Process-product Interface*, 185.
- Prior, P. (2016). *Introduction: An Introduction to Reconstructing the Archive*. Retrieved from <http://ccdigitalpress.org/reconstructingthearchive/>
- Prior, P., & Bilbro, R. (2012). Academic enculturation: Developing literate practices and disciplinary identities. In *University writing: Selves and texts in Academic Societies* (pp. 19-31). Brill.
- Prior, P., Hengst, J., Roozen, K., & Shipka, J. (2006). 'I'll be the sun': From reported speech to semiotic remediation practices. *Text & Talk-An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse Communication Studies*, 26(6), 733-766.
- Prior, P., & Shipka, J. (2003). Chronotopic lamination: Tracing the contours of literate activity. *Writing selves, writing societies: Research from activity perspectives*, 180-238.
- Ramsey, A. E., Sharer, W. B., L'Eplattenier, B., & Mastrangelo, L. (Eds.). (2009). *Working in the archives: Practical research methods for rhetoric and composition*. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press.

More Strategies for Reading Bibliographies

- Look for repetition of certain words and terms used in titles
- Look for repeated authors' names
- Look for names of coauthors
- Look at the types of journals where the authors are published

Summary

Our Scholarly Reading Guide resource series was developed as a way to provide English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners the opportunity to better read and comprehend scholarly texts.

We hope this guide will provide you with strategies for more productive scholarly reading. If you have questions, please contact elc@vanderbilt.edu.

Find this guide and more online at: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/elc/resources/scholarly-reading-guide/>