Slide 1: Introduction

Welcome to a presentation on reading and the research process. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge Pauline Bradford, the academic librarian who gave me permission to use the content in this presentation. In order to produce good assignments, you need to locate and read quality texts. The research and reading for the assignments begin as soon as you are set the task. Researching on the topic and reading the information will take a while, so it is a good idea to set aside plenty of time.

Slide 2: Copyright notice

Slide 3: Plan – Key concepts

When you are set the task, begin by interpreting what is required. Identify key concepts in your topic. For example, if you are asked to write an essay on “What differentiates journalism from other parts of the media and communications industry”, you would highlight ‘Journalism’, ‘traditional media’, ‘other media’, ‘differentiates’, etc. This would help you begin your research process.

Slide 4: Where do I start?

Many students do not know where to start when they are assigned a question. It would be a good idea to begin by identifying what exactly you are trying to find out. Consider what you already know about the topic. Reflect on what was highlighted about the topic in your class discussions and recommended readings. Refer to journals, textbooks, websites, etc. to get an overview about the topic. Decide if you need to clarify terms. If you do, then go back to your handbook or textbook. Your instructors would want you to apply or integrate the theories that have been introduced in your answer. For this particular essay question, you would have to discuss the ‘Authoritarian Theory’, ‘Libertarian Theory’, ‘Social Responsibility Theory’, etc.

Do also think about what types of information you need so that you will know where to search for the information. Most academic assignments would require students to use information from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference papers, etc.
Slide 5: Searching effectively

When brainstorming for key concepts, consider synonyms such as role vs job and alternative spellings such as a ‘s’ or ‘z’ in words such as ‘organization’. Then there are plurals and alternative word endings. For example, typing in ‘differ’ in your search tab will produce all texts that refer to ‘differs, differing, different, differentiate, etc.’ Also consider acronyms such as PR and Public relations if you are producing an essay for this essay question.

Slide 6: Putting it together

Looking for quality articles takes time. You may not get the information you are looking for on first try. You may need to change your search techniques. You may want to type in ‘journalism’ OR ‘journalist’ OR ‘Reporter’ along with AND ‘role’ OR ‘job’ OR ‘Identity’ as well as AND ‘media’ OR ‘new media’ OR ‘online’ OR ‘communication industry’. ‘AND’ links different concepts. By typing in ‘AND’ your search will produce results with all the words listed above. ‘OR’ links similar or alternative concepts to increase results. Your search will find results with at least one of these words.

Slide 7: Search: Which tools?

Your search for information will be easier if you know how to use the tools on the library website. You can use the library catalogue to look for books, films and journal articles. Begin by typing in your option in the search box. In this example, the phrase ‘journalism role’ has been typed in. When searching for phrases such as “communications industry” it would be a good idea to enclose the phrase in quotation marks. This is because some search tools are less intuitive and will not see these as belonging together. Remember to click on the ‘New Search’ tab each time you begin a new search.

Slide 8: Search using library databases

The library database is another platform that you could use to locate your readings. There are particular techniques that can be used to broaden your search. One of them is truncation. Truncation is a technique that is used to find variations and plural of a word using a common stem or root word. For example, in this slide the word ‘journalis*’ has been truncated with an asterisk (*) at the end. By adding the asterisk at the end of a root word, the search will locate all forms of the word.

You can also narrow the search by clicking on the ‘Select a Field’ tab. For example, you can choose to limit your search only within particular texts such as abstracts. Ensure that you keep similar concepts on the same line. You can add more rows if you want to broaden your search with more
concepts. Read the tips at the bottom of the slide for other techniques on locating sources more efficiently.

**Slide 9: Evaluate your resources**

When you have found the readings you have been looking for, evaluate them for their accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage. Check to see if the information provided in the text is accurate. Identify who the author is and their expertise. Examine if the discussion in the reading is objective by considering if the author has highlighted his views without any bias. Do also check to see how current the text is. Anything beyond 10 years may be considered as dated unless the information is applicable over time such as learning theories. Findings of research that was undertaken 15 or 20 years ago may not be applicable in today’s context. That is why it is a good idea to look for current readings. Check also to see how broadly the author has covered the topic or is the discussion limited in its scope thus raising concerns about the claims or generalisations made.

Your instructors want you to use information from scholarly, academic or peer-reviewed texts. Peer-reviewed texts are credible sources as they have been evaluated by a group of experts in the discipline. Refrain from using any information from Wikipedia or other similar sources where you cannot verify the credibility of the content. You can learn about this some more by watching the online video titled ‘You be the judge: learn to evaluate’, on the library homepage.

**Slide 10: Record: managing your results**

When obtaining your readings, ensure that you save them or export them so that you can refer to them when needed. You can print them, email them to yourself, save the search or export the readings to the Bibliographic Management tool. Refer to the sample on this slide.

**Slide 11: Use the library**

Finally, contact the Academic Librarians who are located in the Library for further information about locating quality sources for your assignments. You can talk to them in person or by phone, email them or even chat online.