

The Los Medanos College Library

Controversial Issues Resource Guide

When writing a paper or preparing an oral presentation on a controversial issue, you will need to gather information to support your position and to defend it against opposing arguments. Information of this nature may be found in the wide array of resources at the Library in print, microform, or electronic formats. This guide's aim is to acquaint you with the location, function, and purpose of the services and materials, housed at the Library, of value in research on controversial topics.

Selecting a Controversial Topic

There are several resources at the Library to assist you in selecting a topic:

Pros & Cons Bibliography

This is a list of the Library's books in series that focus on various controversial topics. Copies of the bibliography are on a rack on Level 3, or it may be accessed from the LMC Library Web page at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm> by clicking on "Pros & Cons".

CQ Researcher (H 35 .E34 Con - in the Reference collection)

Browse through the index to *CQ Researcher*. It is located next to the bound issues of this weekly report on subjects currently in the news.

10,000 Ideas for Term Papers, Projects, and Reports (LB 1047.3 .L35 1987 - in the Reference collection) The sections of this book that may be most useful are Contemporary Issues, Social Problems, American Scene, and World Scene.

Encyclopedia of Bioethics (QH 332 .E52 1995 - in the Reference collection)

Browse through the "Alphabetical List of Article Titles" in volume 1 for ideas on issues relating to the life sciences or health care.

Encyclopedia of Ethics (BJ 63 .E45 1992 - in the Reference collection)

The "List of Entries" in volume 1 is useful in locating topics related to moral problems and political, social, and legal theory.

Congressional Digest

Issues of this independently published periodical cover topics currently being considered by the U.S. Congress.

Vertical File

Located on Level 3 behind the Reference Desk, this file contains pamphlets and other information covering a variety of topics.

Internet Sites

See the list of Pro and Con Web Sites provided on the last page of this guide.

Locating Books

The Online Catalog

The online catalog provides the record, call number, and loan status of each book in the LMC collection and those of Contra Costa College and Diablo Valley College. In addition to catalog terminals located on Level 3, you can access the catalog via the LMC Library Web page at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm>.

Pro & Con Books

The Library's circulating book collection (those books which can be checked out) includes five series that give opposing viewpoints on complex and sensitive issues. These books provide a starting point for critical thinking, discussion, and debate. For a full list of the books and their call numbers in each series, go to the LMC Library website page at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm> and click on "Pros & Cons".

Current Controversies

Excerpts from articles, newspapers, and books are used to present authoritative opinions on issues of national and international interest in a pro/con format. A short bibliography and a list of organizations are included. Example titles: *Garbage and Waste*, *Genetics and Intelligence*, *Native American Rights*, and *Politicians and Ethics*.

Opposing Viewpoints

Opposing Viewpoints/At Issue

Opposing Viewpoints/American History

Each title explores many aspects of a broad issue using expert opinions from contemporary and historical authors in a pro/con format. Included are bibliographies, lists of relevant organizations, glossaries, and chronologies. Example titles: *Aging Population*, *American Frontier*, *Bill of Rights*, *Censorship*, *Civil Liberties*, *Culture Wars*, *Epidemics*, *Global Warming*, *Great Depression*, *Interracial America*, *Male/Female Roles*, *Media Violence*, *Paranormal Phenomenon*, *Slavery*, and *Welfare*.

Taking Sides

Pro and con arguments, taken from journal articles and books written by experts, are presented. They focus on diverse topics surrounding a broad issue area. Examples: *American History*, *Bioethical Issues*, *Economic Issues*, *Educational Issues*, *Legal Issues*, *Political Issues*, and *Psychological Issues*.

Reference Books

The books in the Reference Collection, located on Level 3, are non-circulating materials designed to be consulted for a broad survey of subjects as well as for specific facts and information. Here you can consult general and specialized dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, handbooks, statistical yearbooks, atlases, chronologies, and other books.

Encyclopedias

Encyclopedias are often a good place to start your research on controversial issues because they provide a broad overview of topics. Most encyclopedias have

comprehensive indexes that can be helpful in locating all the information relevant to your topic contained in the set.

Encyclopedias can be general or specialized. General encyclopedias, such as **The World Book Encyclopedia** (AE 5 .W55), **The Encyclopedia Britannica** (AE 5 .C683), and **The Encyclopedia Americana** (AE 5 .E333), cover almost all areas of knowledge. Examples of specialized encyclopedias are listed below to give you a sense of the wide array of subjects within this category of reference resources:

<i>African American Encyclopedia</i> (8 volumes)	E 185 .A253 1993
<i>Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare</i>	HV 4708 .E53 1998
<i>Encyclopedia of Bioethics</i> (5 volumes)	QH 332 .E52 1995
<i>Encyclopedia of Democracy</i> (2 volumes)	JC 423 .E53 1995
<i>Encyclopedia of Drugs and Alcohol</i> (4 volumes)	HV 5804 .E53 1995
<i>Encyclopedia of Ethics</i> (2 volumes)	BJ 63 .E45 1992
<i>Encyclopedia of Homosexuality</i> (2 volumes)	HQ 76.25 .E53 1990
<i>Encyclopedia of Multiculturalism</i> (6 volumes)	E 184 .A1 E58 1993
<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i> (16 volumes)	BL 31 .E46 1986
<i>Encyclopedia of Special Education</i> (3 volumes)	LC 4007 .E53 1987
<i>Encyclopedia of the American Judicial System</i> (3 vols.)	KF 154 .E53 1987
<i>Encyclopedia of the Holocaust</i> (4 volumes)	D 804.3 .E53 1990
<i>Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East</i> (4 volumes)	DS 43 .E53 1996
<i>Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War</i>	DS 557.7 .E53 1996
<i>Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine</i> (5 volumes)	RC 41 .G35 1999
<i>Gay Histories and Cultures: an Encyclopedia</i>	HQ 75.13 .G37 2000
<i>Lesbian Histories and Cultures: and Encyclopedia</i>	HQ 75.5 .L4395 2000

One specialized encyclopedia which may be of particular value is **The Encyclopedia of Associations** (HS 17 .G334). It is a source of detailed information concerning nearly 23,000 nonprofit American membership organizations. Phone and fax numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses are provided to enable you to contact organizations to request information. Use the subject index in volume 3 to find the entry number for organizations involved in your research topic. Then locate those entry numbers in volume 1 or 2 for the organizations' informational listings.

Dictionaries

Some dictionaries are closely related to encyclopedias, providing extensive coverage of subjects. Examples of non-language dictionaries in the Reference Collection are:

<i>Dictionary of Art</i> (34 volumes)	N 31 .D5 1996
<i>Dictionary of Black African Civilization</i>	DT 352.4 .D5213
<i>Dictionary of Indian Tribes</i> (3 volumes)	E 54.5 .D53 1993
<i>Dictionary of the Battles</i>	D 25 .A2 D53 1988
<i>Dictionary of the History of Ideas</i> (4 volumes)	CB 5 .D52
<i>New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> (20 vols.)	ML 100 .N48 1980

Almanacs, Guides, "Reference Libraries", Atlases, and Handbooks

Like encyclopedias and dictionaries, these types of reference works provide substantial information in various subject areas. Examples included in the Library's collection are:

<i>Alternative Medicine Handbook</i>	R 733 .C375 1998
<i>American Immigrant Cultures</i>	E 184 .A1 A63448 1997
<i>The Asian American Almanac</i>	E 184 .O6 A824 1995
<i>Atlas of American Migration</i>	G 1201 .E27 F5 1998
<i>Bioethics for Students: How Do We Know What's Right?</i> (4 volumes)	R 724 .B4825 1999
<i>Guide to the U.S. Supreme Court</i>	JK 1571 .C65 1979
<i>Reference Library of Asian America</i>	E 184 .O6 R45 1995
<i>Reference Library of Black America</i>	E 185 .R44 1997
<i>Reference Library of European America</i>	E 184 .E95 R45
<i>Reference Library of Hispanic America</i>	E 184 .S75 R44 1993
<i>Reference Library of Native North America</i>	E 77 .N37 1994
<i>We the People: An Atlas of America's Ethnic Diversity</i>	E 184 .A1 A479

Magazines, Journals, and Newspapers

The Library subscribes to many magazines, journals, and newspapers in paper and electronically. The most current paper issues of periodicals are located on Level 3. To locate back issues, access the Library's Web page at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm> and click on Periodical List.

The Library has several online computer databases that allow you to find magazine, journal, and newspaper articles from on or off campus.

Electronic databases available from the Los Medanos College Library Web page, located at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm>, are:

Infotrac-Expanded Academic ASAP (1980 - current)

Infotrac-Expanded Academic ASAP provides online access to articles from more than 1,900 scholarly and general-interest publications. Searching for articles by subject in this database can be of particular value because broad subjects can be narrowed into subtopics. These subtopics may include moral and ethical, economic, religious, demographic, health, social, legal, international, physiological, psychological, and/or political aspects of your subject.

Infotrac-Health Reference Center (coverage of the last four years)

Infotrac-Health Reference Center provides online access to articles in the areas of consumer health information, nursing, and allied health. Articles from leading academic publications, consumer health magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, and newspapers are included, as well as material from five medical reference books.

ProQuest Direct

ProQuest Direct provides full-text, online, comprehensive coverage of articles in five major national newspapers - *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Dialog@CARL

Dialog@CARL provides full-text access to articles in seven daily Northern California newspapers: *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *The Contra Costa Times*, *The West County Times*, *The Valley Times*, and *The San Ramon Valley Times*. Several local weekly newspapers are also a part of the database.

SIRS Researcher

SIRS Researcher provides thousands of full-text articles on social, scientific, health, historic, business, economic, political, and global issues. Articles are taken from approximately 1,500 newspaper, magazine, journal, and government publications. Graphics, including charts, maps, diagrams, and drawings, are often included.

Print Indexes to periodical articles, which go back many years, are available on Level 3:

<i>The New York Times Index</i>	(1971 - 1994)
<i>Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i>	(March 1969 - current)
<i>The San Francisco Chronicle Index</i>	(1977 - 1994)

Statistics

In developing and proving a point, a writer or speaker can use statistics to make comparisons or show proportions. Statistics can be found in books and periodicals as well as online. A guide to finding statistics is available in print on Level 3 or electronically via the Library's Web page at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm>. Click on Library Handouts, then select Statistics Resource Guide. Examples of statistical reference books at the Library are:

<i>Aging America: Trends and Projections</i>	HQ 1064 .U5 A57 1991
<i>County and City Data Book</i>	HA 202 .A36
<i>Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics</i>	HV 6787 .S68 1998
<i>Statistical Abstract of the United States</i>	HA 202 .A3
<i>Statistical Handbook on Women in America</i>	HQ 1420 .T34 1991
<i>Statistical Record of Asian Americans</i>	E 184 .O6 S73 1993
<i>Statistical Record of the Environment</i>	TD 180 .D37 1994
<i>World Factbook</i>	JF 37 .W67

A Matter of Fact

A Matter of Fact is an electronic database that provides statistics on social, economic, political, health, environmental, and public policy issues. About 25% of the abstracts are derived from Congressional hearings, 15% from the Congressional Record, and the remainder from general interest and specialized magazines, newsletters, and newspapers. *A Matter of Fact* is available from the LMC Library website located at <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm>. Click on Electronic Databases, then on *A Matter of Fact*.

Other Useful Sources

California Journal

This nonpartisan, monthly magazine is devoted to state and federal issues of current interest in California.

Congressional Digest

Each issue of this independent, monthly periodical focuses on one controversial topic currently before the U.S. Congress.

CQ Researcher (H35 .E34 Con - in the Reference collection).

Each weekly report provides an overview of a current, controversial topic of widespread interest. The reports present alternative views, background information, a chronology, the outlook, and an extensive bibliography. In addition to copies in the periodical collection, bound annual editions are located in the Reference book collection.

Facts on File

This weekly periodical, located on the Index Table on Level 3, is a digest of news and current events from major, worldwide newspapers and magazines.

Vertical File

The Vertical File, located in the file cabinets behind the Reference Desk on Level 3, contains pamphlets and other miscellaneous information covering a variety of topics. Vertical File materials cannot be checked out, but they may be photocopied.

Internet Resources

The Library has computers with Internet access (located on Levels 1 and 3) that you may use to research your topic. In addition to using search engines and subject indexes to find relevant websites, the following resources may be of particular value:

Pro & Con Web Sites

The Best Information on the Net: Hot Paper Topics

<http://library.sau.edu/bestinfo/Hot/hotindex.htm>

Nonline-Nonprofit network: PRO CON <http://www.nonline.com/ProCon/default.htm>

Policy.com: Issues Library <http://www.policy.com/issues>

Project Vote Smart: Research the Issues <http://www.vote-smart.org/issues>

Public Agenda Online <http://www.publicagenda.org>

University of Colorado, Boulder: Hot Topics-in the news and under discussion

<http://www-libraries.colorado.edu/ps/gov/hot.htm>

Los Medanos College Library Web Page <http://www.losmedanos.net/library.htm>

The Los Medanos College Library provides 24 hour research assistance on the Internet through its "virtual library reference desk". Links are provided to information about the Library and to a multitude of research resources. These linked resources include:

The Library's online book catalog, the Library's online video catalog, periodical databases (some in full-text), the Pros & Cons bibliography, the Library's periodical list, library handouts, a variety of Internet search engines and subject indexes, and phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the Library's staff.

By clicking on "**e-Reference Net**", access is provided to online almanacs, dictionaries, encyclopedias, statistics, government information, organizations, writing and style guides, Internet guides, biographies, maps, and much more.