

RESEARCH TASK

In the past, the main source of information for students was the encyclopedia. Usually a schoolroom had one set at the back of the room. Boys and girls were expected to draw all their data for any research project from the same source. Needless to say, most of the reports sounded the same.

Today most schools have libraries where students can find books, magazines, recordings, tapes, and computers. Local libraries also have library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators. The introduction of the computer and access to the Internet has further added to the resources students can use when searching for information. In libraries of a few years ago, card catalogs were used to tell researchers where to find books. The cards were listed in three sections: by Title, by Author, and by Subject. Today, knowing any of the three sections allows you to find a book, but instead of unwieldy boxes filled with cards, students can go straight to the computer system to find where a book, file, film, or article can be found.

In order to understand how to use the available materials, it is necessary to learn how a library is organized. It would be totally impossible to go to a librarian and ask for a red book, for instance. We have a man named Melvil Dewey to thank for the easy access we now have. In 1876 he developed what is now called the Dewey Decimal System. The system divides information into 10 main groups with sub-groups in each category. It is quite easy to go right to the book or other source of data for which we are searching.

In this unit of study you will do study the Dewey Decimal System and be asked to fill in graphic organizers to show that you understand the process of finding information on the Internet. What you learn will be an asset to you now and in the future. Whatever you want to learn, whatever you have questions about, whatever interests you, all are at your fingertips if you know how to use what is available.