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## General works

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### The Craft of Research (4th edition)

Wayne C. Booth and others

The University of Chicago Press

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The *Craft of Research* has become a staple in research methods classes, having been in print for the past two decades. Its appeal is global as it has been translated and continues to be available in several languages. One reason for its success is that it is written in a down-to-earth style that is accessible to both high schoolers and college students. Now in its fourth edition, it continues to provide fundamental guiding principles for both the novice and experienced researcher on how to approach research.

Originally written by distinguished educators and researchers, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, now all deceased, this fourth edition has been revised and updated by Joseph Bizup, Associate Professor at Boston University and William Fitzgerald, Associate Professor at Rutgers University. In keeping with the original text, the book is divided into five sections. In the fourth edition these are:

- Research, Researchers and Readers, which introduces the topic of writing as thinking;
- Asking Questions, Finding Answers, which orients the readers to how to plan a research project;
- Making an Argument, which unpacks the stages of constructing a research argument that will stand up to rigorous critique;
- Writing Your Argument, which deals with the craft of writing in the scholarly tradition, with emphasis on clarity, precision, and style; and
- Some Last Considerations, a brief chapter containing information on ethics, advice to

instructors using this book with their students and a fecund bibliography of information resources broadly categorized by discipline.

Revisers Bizup and Fitzgerald maintain the spirit of the earlier editions by treating research generally. It is not difficult to understand why this work has become so well respected. The literature on research methods is saturated with technical books on both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Although these books are critical in teaching and documenting best practices, what sets *The Craft of Research* apart from these other resources is that it teaches the reader how to think deeply about research in a more general sense. It is partly a book on critical thinking and partly a book on advanced writing. So, while other books might explain how to number crunch statistics, this book deals more with the relationship between the writer and the reader by presenting, for example, an advice on which type of statistical table or graph will best help writers present their arguments to the reader. This work offers the researcher creative ways to chart out their research such as graphically storyboarding ideas to corral and evaluate them, or how to use self-interrogation to develop research problems that people really care about to conquer the infamous what's-the-point aspect of research. By offering advice on how to prepare for and counter readers' skepticism this book helps researchers strengthen their arguments and polish their writing.

The ample, updated examples of present-day research propositions used to illustrate such thought exercises help to keep the approach fresh and contemporary for a new generation of readers. Information professionals and experienced researchers will especially appreciate the expanded and updated sections on how to find resources in today's information-rich, digital environment. This is something that previous editions of this work lacked. The sections on information gathering in this updated edition reflect realistic aspects of what students face today such as database searching and how to understand current advances in library services to make the most of them. Of particular note is the detailed explanation and advice to not ignore print resources if they provide information not replicated in digital formats.

Because of its unique character and straightforward advice, this book makes a perfect complement to research methods books that focus on specific disciplines and philosophical approaches. It can guide the researcher through the complexities of turning a topic into a research plan; assist in the organizing and drafting of ideas; strengthen the researcher's understanding of concepts like warrant, proof



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Reference Reviews

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and research problem; and help develop masterly writing skills. This revised edition is highly recommended for all college and university instruction in non-fiction writing and research methodology, and for upper-level high school students who aspire to advance into higher education. It is also recommended for all

accomplished, published researchers and non-fiction writers who embrace the notion that one is never too advanced to hone one's skills.

**Susan Frey**

*Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives,  
Cunningham Memorial Library, Indiana State  
University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA*