**Using Background Sources**

**When:** Introduce your students to background research tools, such as CQ Researcher, in class around the time you introduce the naive draft or topic proposal assignment.  Students should be exposed to these tools early in the writing process as they are helpful for "pre-search" and topic idea generation. \*\*The use of background sources will not be covered in the library instruction session.

**What:** Introduce your students to the following two background research tools. We've included suggested talking points.

* **[CQ Researcher](http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher" \o "CQ Researcher" \t "_blank)**Website route: Library homepage > A-Z Databases > C > CQ Researcher
Choosing a research topic is research.  Your topic will begin as an idea, hopefully one that is interesting or meaningful to you.  But before you dive into looking for scholarly articles for your paper, it’s necessary to do some preliminary/exploratory research to gather “background information” about your idea before you commit to it.  Background information includes an overview or summary of a topic and facts, definitions, names, dates, events, organizations and terms associated with it.  You may collect some of this information from Google or Wikipedia, but the library offers several resources/tools to find credible background information.  One of these resources is CQ Researcher. CQ Researcher is a database of reports on current topics.  Reports include an overview, historical background, chronology, pro/con feature, plus resources for additional research.  Reports are written by journalists, fact-checked, and include footnotes. Demonstrate browsing by topic and searching for specific topic, emailing link to report, downloading PDF, Citing feature
* **Wikipedia**

Wikipedia can be used as a background source, allowing you to learn more about your topic.  Use Wikipedia to help you understand the scope (e.g. “how broad”) of your topic, the main issues, as well as to identify keywords for searching.  In using Wikipedia, you should understand that because there is no editorial control, anyone can contribute; consequently, the authority and quality of the information may vary greatly from entry-to-entry.  You should not cite Wikipedia or use information from Wikipedia in your research; however, you may look at the sources cited on Wikipedia, track down those sources, and use those in your research.  You will still need to evaluate each of the cited sources to determine if it is a quality and authoritative resource for your paper.  We will learn more about evaluating information sources in the library instruction session.

**Additional Background Sources**

*Website route: Library homepage > A-Z Databases > G > Gale Virtual Reference Library*The Library provides online access to a number of encyclopedias and other background resources. These encyclopedias tend to be subject or topic-focused and cover a wide range of topics. The Library provides access to two searchable collections of encyclopedias - Gale Virtual Reference Library and Sage Knowledge. A good way to get background information on your topic, as well as identified key players and stakeholders, is to search one of these collections. Note that when you are searching encyclopedias, you want to be more simple and broad in your search approach. For example, if you are interested in exploring the impact of food deserts on obesity, you would do best to do two separate searches: one for “food deserts” and one for “obesity”.