Identifying a community or community member

It’s important to take the time up front to choose a community and community member(s) of interest to you. Start by listing a community that you are already a part of.

Choose a community that you are already a part of.

Example 1: I am part of my freshmen hall. Example 2: I am part of the online gaming community of Steam of the game Rocket League.

Try writing a question regarding shared materials of your community.

Example 1: How do freshmen hall announcements create a sense of community? Example 2: How do achievements, inventory items, and online conversations with fellow gamers of Rocket League create a sense of belonging for your community?

Think of questions for your community members:

You should go into your interview with a balance of open-ended questions (questions that prompt a response beyond ‘yes’ or ‘no’) and closed questions (questions that prompt ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ and other one-word answers). You should also allow room for on-the-moment exchanges, or for the interview to be more conversational.

Start listing questions below. Begin with a broad question, one that you can follow-up by asking questions that focus on a particular aspect of the community and member(s). For example, you may be interested in certain activities and their effect on the community—a certain TV program in the freshmen hall that has caused an emotional reaction for members; or a downloadable game update for Rocket League that has its Steam community in an uproar.

Example 1 (Broad): What do you like most about the Steam community for Rocket League?
Example 2 (Specific): You identified light-hearted competition as part of the fun for you. Why do you think the competition with friends you play with for this game is light-hearted?
Population/Group

Try writing questions about a specific population. These categories can include age groups, relations to member(s), or shared interests, for example.

Example 1: Can you describe the people who you connect with the most in your freshmen hall? Example 2: List the people who you communicate the most with on Steam? Family members? Have you met new friends?

Positionality

Find ways to relate to your member(s) through shared narratives.

Example 1: I started attending our hall’s movie night for The Dark Knight trilogy, which was the first time I felt a part of our hall. How did you become an active member of our hall? Example 2: I couldn’t play Rocket League at all last week because of the papers I had to write. Have there been times when you were inactive in the community for some time? If yes, why?

Importance / Impact

Find out what your member(s) would like to see in your community for the future.

Example 1: What improvements would you like to see with our hall activities? Example 2: How do you think that sense of community could be improved in Rocket League’s Steam community?

Is your topic too narrow?

If you can answer your interview question in a single sentence, or if your topic is something very recent, you might need to work harder to find supporting resources. Try thinking about what questions you still have as you are doing some preliminary reading. You can look for background information on related ideas or expand the way you’re approaching your topic to get to a more generalized research question. For example, if your research topic focuses on Tucson and you aren’t able to find enough information or formulate enough questions, try expanding it to the Southwest.
Your interview questions:

Take a look at the different questions that you developed. Try combining elements from any or all of the questions, or coming up with new ones, until you have a set that you’d like to start your interview with.

Select keywords and synonyms:

Along with gathering primary information through your interview, you will also be gathering information from library resources. To prepare for searching for your two published sources, you will choose keywords from your questions. You’ll also come up with synonyms that you can try if your original keywords aren’t working. You will learn how to use these words to search for resources in the activity following the completion of this worksheet.

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<th>Keyword</th>
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Start looking for resources:

Starting out with a focused research question can help make sure you find materials to get you started. As you begin looking for articles, books, or other materials on your topic, your research question is likely to shift. The research process is never a straight path. Keep an open mind, and don’t be surprised if you need to adapt your topic based on the resources you discover.

Background information

To find background information on your topic look at:

- News sites and news databases
  (Examples of some of the news sources accessible through the Lexis Nexis database: AZ Daily Star, Daily Wildcat, Tucson Weekly, Washington Post, NPR, Reuters)
- CQ Researcher
- Encyclopedia articles
- Academic Search Ultimate

Subject-specific sources

- Look at the databases by subject on the UA Libraries website
- Ask your librarian (http://ask.library.arizona.edu/)
- Locate the subject guide that most relates to your topic

As you proceed with your search, think about what aspects of your community profile are new and interesting and pay attention to the words that people are using to discuss your topic. You can use these words to continue moving your search and your topic forward. Remember, this is the beginning of the research process, not just the end of a worksheet, so have fun with this exploration!

Adapted from:
- http://info-skills.lib.vt.edu/choosing_focusing/10.html
- http://www.esc.edu/online-writing-center/exercise-room/research-question-broad-or-narrow/
- http://libguides.mit.edu/select-topic