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Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G. & Williams, Joseph M. (2008).
The Craft of Research. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

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The third edition of *The Craft of Research* is designed as a guide for all researchers from high school to university faculty. The authors maintain a straightforward approach and provide invaluable advice to novice and experience researchers. The book is organized into five parts: I.) research, researchers, and readers (prologue and chapters 1 and 2); II.) asking questions and finding answers (chapters 3-6); III.) making a claim and supporting it (chapters 7-11); IV.) planning, drafting, and revising (chapters 12-17); and V.) the ethics of research and bibliographical resources. Of particular note are the Quick Tips sprinkled throughout the



Booth, Colomb & Williams

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chapters that provide succinct, specific ideas for formulating research questions and conducting research.

Last year participants in my doctoral research class read and reviewed this book. We agreed that we had learned useful strategies and approaches to consider when designing research projects. The following review is based upon the seminar members' careful analysis of the five parts of the book and the chapters within each part.

The prologue is an overview of what has changed in this edition, namely the updated section on online research and a section explaining how the reader might benefit from the book.

Part I, "Research, Researchers, and Readers," explains the research process. For those writing a research paper for the first time, the information is a practical guide for how to start a study. For those familiar with the research process, the authors provide pertinent information about the various aspects of research including 1) multiple forms of writing; 2) various audiences authors might address; and 3) writing styles that are congruent with the anticipated reading audience.

Part II, "Asking Questions, Finding Answers," begins with chapter 3- how to find your topic and narrow it down to a focused study. Chapter 4 provides more information about narrowing your topic to a research question and then into a problem of interest to your reading audience. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss how to find, evaluate, and read research using primary, secondary, and tertiary resources and how to evaluate the validity and reliability of each resource type. Reading, summarizing, and citing the literature relevant to your study is included. The authors emphasize connections between sources and the development of research questions as researchers read information thoroughly and collaborate with others to strengthen their claims.

Part III, "Making a Claim and Supporting It," explains how to develop a clear argument for your research study. Chapter 7 provides visual models, relevant examples, and reassuring

words to guide the researcher in the development of a successful argument. In chapter 8, writers must address three questions when forming a claim: (1) What kind of claim should I make? (2) Is it specific enough? (3) Will readers think it is significant enough to need an argument supporting it? Writers then determine the kind of claim to make 1) a practical claim directly guides readers on how to interpret the evidence provided in the paper and 2) a conceptual claim requires readers to interpret both the information in the paper and how it contributes to our current understanding of the topic. Writers are directed to insure that their claim is specific in content and significant in nature; and not a case of “arrogant certainty.” Authors should acknowledge limitations in the research and avoid strong wording such as all, no one, always, and never. In chapters 9 and 10, the relationship between the core of an argument and substantiating evidence is discussed. The authors encourage the use of a storyboard to organize claims as there is “proof” that the data presented is supported and analyzed by a solid base of evidence. Although individuals interpret data differently, misrepresentation of data is a serious breach of professional ethics. Every argument must address other points of view, as writers predict their audience and “speak on their behalf.” “Who wants you to be wrong?” is a question that authors must consider when writing their manuscripts.

While it is good advice that writers be aware of both sides of the concept they are arguing, in chapter 10 the authors potentially over-encourage writers to acknowledge faults in their research. While addressing key limitations may be important and reinforce the intended message of the writer, it may cause the reader to be wary of the author’s viewpoint. Chapter 11 connects individuals outside of the field of study to validate a new or controversial theory or to defend one’s reasoning. Relevance and evidence are clearly stated when developing warrants.

In the beginning of Part IV, “Planning, Drafting, and Revising,” chapter 12 discusses two main concepts. The first is the storyboard, an organizational strategy providing a sequential, visual representation of one’s thinking. The

second concept explains that the writer's initial goal may be to write in a way that makes the reader feel comfortable by using well-regarded literature and well-accepted concepts. Chapter 13 focuses on three main topics : 1)citations, 2)ethics, and 3) citation formats. The second half of this chapter presents Chicago, APA, and MLA styles of citing sources. These formats are continuously changed and updated; thus, readers cannot be confident that each example is a valid and current sample. Revision, from altering the framework of the paper, to identifying and evaluating the quality of your argument is theme of chapter 14. Practical advice such as circling key vocabulary and underlying similar themes are recommended to ensure consistency within the manuscript.

Chapter 15 concentrates on venues to present information through visual representation including charts, graphs, and tables. While short in nature, this chapter can be best used as a reference guide for writers who want to look at different options and choose an appropriate visual tool. Chapter 16 introduces writing introductions and conclusions- specific guidelines and examples are provided on how to create an intriguing beginning and maintain the readers' interest through the end of the paper. A formula for a good introduction includes contextual background, presenting the problem, and providing a response. The conclusion of the manuscript should restate the main tenets of the paper and increase readers' understanding and appreciation of the topic. Using technical or unfamiliar terminology makes it difficult for understand.

Revising work for clarity in chapter 17 includes eliciting emotive responses from readers and the need for clarity of the first and last words of passages. Four principles of revising one's work are: 1) Subjects and characters; 2) Verbs, nouns, and actions; 4) Connecting the old with the new; and 4) Complexity.

Ethical research and writing is the focus of Part V. Plagiarism must be viewed as theft because it weakens the community. In the conclusion, examples of

acknowledgements are provided; this thesaurus-like list of terms is a very useful resource when writing a paper.

While most information presented by the authors is relevant, the approach to several processes is dated. The authors suggest storyboarding ideas using note cards, while other current technologies may be more appropriate. The source-gathering and bibliographic strategies gave inadequate attention to online searching or various programs such as Endnote. The online section was revised in the third edition; however, the revision was not sufficient. The Appendix of Bibliographical Resources is not updated; electronic resources and others should be updated. The presentation of citation styles is confusing, and some of it is incorrect. Readers must refer to the appropriate style manual for their discipline.

Throughout the book, our favorite end-of-chapter Quick Tips share examples and give advice to encourage the researcher in this difficult task of writing a research paper. Key concepts are explained clearly and explicitly; the book is organized in a logical, sequential order. We recommend *The Craft of Research* as a handy reference for both novice and experienced researchers.

About the Reviewers

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Front Row: Anita K. Manwell, Deborah A. Ceglowski
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