Encyclopedia and Data Report Assignment

At this point, you should choose a general topic to search for, one that stems from our studies so far. It's okay if your topic choice is a little "fuzzy" at this point—this homework should help with that. Keep in mind, though; that you will need to complete this stage of research for any topic you ultimately go with. If your topic idea is really narrow, develop more general but related search terms in order to get good results from the encyclopedias and web resources required below.

For this assignment, you will find a handful of web and reference sources in order to build a base understanding of your topic. (See below for specific requirements.) Then, you will post a report to your blog, documenting what you learned in your search. Be sure your post includes:

1. A little bit (or a lot) of description of your search ***process***—tell the story of your search. You can even make your own creative chart/illustration/diagram if you'd like (see student example below—but yours can be hand-written or drawn & scanned, or could be a totally different, creative, digital format). In some way you must identify your ***sources***, represent the ***range*** of materials you looked at, and share highlights from your ***search***.
2. Summary of your findings. ***Cite*** specific sources. Your report should ***explain*** what you learned from your search, how it ***relates*** to your topic idea, and what information was ***useful***. Your report should be about 500-1000 words. (see student example below) Your report can be very data-driven.

Your post should be in the style of a regular blog post, just like you've been practicing.

Encyclopedia Search

For this part, you will have to spend some time browsing encyclopedias. As your sixth grade librarian probably taught you, encyclopedias are (still) an excellent (maybe the best) starting point for finding out about a subject. Thankfully, encyclopedias have also come a long way; though they exist in the traditional book format in abundance in the various SU Libraries, we can now access some very sophisticated reference tools via the SU Library website.

I've provided you with a list of recommended encyclopedic resources—use this to get started (see below). **I would like you to choose a few (two or three) of encyclopedia articles to browse through**.

Do a Web Data Search

For this part, you will have to spend some time browsing the general web and some suggested databases (use the list provided to you at the bottom).

The web and databases should be used to gather general information, statistics, and background information you are seeking to better understand your topic. As you search, gather your findings and take good notes, making sure to keep track of sources or info that is really helpful or potentially useful. You can have a lot of freedom in the sources you look at; that is, Google things, use Wikipedia, or work with any databases you're familiar with if you'd like. Keep your attention focused on evaluating sources as you go—for example, make sure that you are getting reliable, unbiased, current information. Skip any websites that seem to be amateur, outdated, or doubtful. Ballenger has some helpful pages on this in Chapter 2—be sure to consult these pages if you are new to this kind of research. **I would like you to work with a handful of resources/websites—anywhere from 2-10, depending on your time and research needs.**

Grading:
A= Excellent, above and beyond, follows all directions fully & executes them thoughtfully. Well edited, attention to detail.
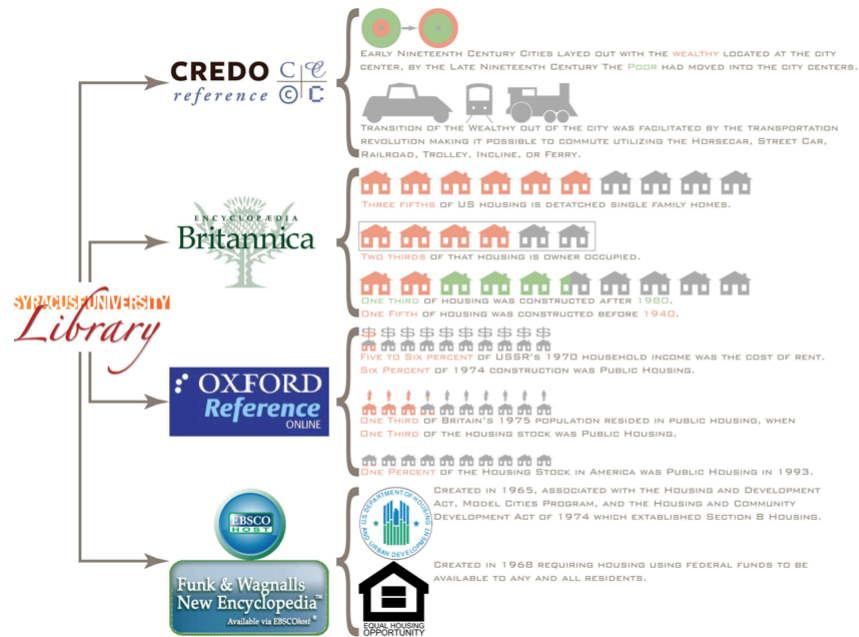B=Good, nice effort, follows directions fully. Well-edited. Could be more detailed.
C=Follows most but not all directions, or does not follow them thoroughly. Significant room for improvement/revision. Not well-edited.
D=Fails to follow directions, is incomplete. Not well-edited.

Sample Student "Show your Search"

Sample Student "Write A Report"

Emergency Preparedness Research Report (The "Data Report" Part of the Encyclopedia and Data Report)

Time and time again throughout history, natural disasters have shown mankind, first hand, that there is a true need to be prepared for the unexpected. It was seen with the devastating earthquakes in Chile, Haiti, China, and Japan just within the last several years, and it was seen in the response to Hurricane Katrina. History repeats itself, forever serving as a warning to the future. Disaster has struck in the past, and every time, victims find themselves ill-prepared; disaster will strike again. In the midst of these disasters and their aftermath, people become ever more desperate, and begin to do crazy and stupid things that they, under normal circumstances, would not. Historically, crime increases during the aftermath of disaster stricken areas, and victims are hardly ever prepared to deal with these burdens.

In order to first show that crime increases in post disaster areas, a simple definition of what emergency preparedness entails is needed because it is such a crucial element to any disaster. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), emergency preparedness is a "...function charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters." (Blanchard 4). While this seem very vague, it *has* to be vague because threats are constantly changing and evolving, as are the counter measures to which they are prepared for.

However, emergency preparedness following disasters is not anything the government should be bragging about anytime soon. More often than not, government agencies and organizations are out of communication with one another and unsure of who is overseeing what. To avoid this very problem and others like it, ranging from counter terrorism to information networking, the Department of Homeland Security was created in November, 2002 (Department of Homeland Security). As a response to the 9/11 attacks on American soil, the government combined and absorbed several different agencies and unified them all together. These included agencies from the Department of Defense, the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, Housing and Urban Development, and numerous others, including FEMA, which ultimately created the Department of Homeland Security (Federal Emergency Management Agency). This also served as the largest reorganization of the Executive Branch since the 1940s; the Department of Homeland Security was unable to adequately respond to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans because it was one of their first major deployments, which was seen far and wide throughout the country.

Victims of Hurricane Katrina found themselves incredibly unprepared in the immediate aftermath. Communication problems delayed the aid to the affected areas, while politicians fiercely attacked each other as a way to try and gain votes in upcoming elections. Democrats and Republicans further delayed the response by trying to pin the blame on one another. Meanwhile, the victims needed to fend for themselves, and in several reports later published, the government declared that emergency first responders were "dangerously unprepared" (Kady). Additionally, other reports began to stress the necessity for individual citizens to be able to respond for their families (Prah). None of these suggestions were ever apparent until after Katrina's failings became evident.

Still, even though many reports did not surface until after Katrina had hit about being prepared, a Disaster Response Team and Fraud Strike Force in Mobile County joined resources to alert citizens about crime increases following major disasters. Scams, theft, con artists, and other criminals enter disaster affected areas and prey upon the chaos, particularly targeting senior citizens, who are less suspecting. "In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Mobile County District Attorney's Office responded to nearly a thousand complaints about identity theft, fraud, price gouging, and many other white-collar crimes, as well as drug-related and violent crimes." The report continued to explain that crime levels can stay slightly elevated for as long as three years after a major disaster hits (Tyson). Another report, published by the World Health Organization, explained that violence increases more than anything else after a major disaster. Specifically, aggravated assaults, child abuse and neglect, and intimate partner/sexual violence increases the most. This is generally due to "increased stress levels, the scarcity of basic provisions, and the destruction of social networks" (Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention).

All in all, emergency preparedness has changed dramatically in the past decade. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the need to actively defend and update America's counter-intelligence and security resulted in the formation of the Department of Homeland Security. However, through their reformation,

they absorbed the previously independent Federal Emergency Management Agency, which caused it to not be able to respond well to victims of Hurricane Katrina. The lessons learned from this showed just how ill-prepared both Americans and the emergency responders are for the unexpected, which further shows the need of people needing to stop relying on the government for assistance and aid. Meanwhile, as everyone is disorganized, criminals take advantage of the opportunity to harm others, which causes violent crime to increase after major disasters occur. All of these aspects of the Department of Homeland Security are interrelated, and until the very core of the problems are identified and resolved, Americans can only continue to expect similar government responses to Hurricane Katrina.

Throughout all of this research, I learned that the reorganization of the Executive Branch was too sudden, due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Department of Homeland Security was formed very quickly, and at first had no authority, which kept it from performing even the most simple of responsibilities. It is also a very large Department, which means that internal communication was originally a major problem; all of these aspects kept FEMA and DHS from performing well with Katrina. However, more importantly, is that the idea of this increase in crime is caused from DHS' inability to respond and maintain order. Still, a lot of this research is very broad, and I want to continue researching this aspect of crime in post disaster areas. The most important question I currently have about all of this research is that if the Department of Homeland Security was able to maintain order and respond effectively following a major disaster, how much would crime increase, and could they do anything about it?

Works Cited

Prah, Pamela M. "Disaster Preparedness." *CQ Researcher* 18 Nov. 2005: 981-1004. Web. 22 March, 2012. http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre2005111800&type=hitlist&num=1

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Department of Homeland Security. Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia. 2002. 22 March, 2012 http://web.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/detail?sid=33c188eb-c386-45a7-a01d-facc7f911152%40sessionmgr114&vid=1&hid=126&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=funk&AN=HO082750

Kady II, Martin. "Homeland Security." *CQ Researcher* 12 Sept. 2003: 749-72. Web. 26 March, 2012. http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre2003091200&type=hitlist&num=13

Tyson, John M. Jr. "Emergency Response Information Kit". Your Protection Against Post Disaster Crime. Mobile County District Attorney's Office. 26 March, 2012. http://www.mcema.net/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Ul69ooEL38U%3D&tabid=668

"Violence and Disasters". Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention. World Health Organization. 2005. 26 March, 2012. http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/violence_disasters.pdf

Blanchard, Wayne. "Principles of Emergency Management Supplement". 11 September, 2007. Federal Emergency Management Agency. 27 March, 2012.

Encyclopedia & Data Report Source Recommendations

➲ Reference Universe (electronic resource, available only via SU Lib website)

This is a great resource that will let you search the *indexes* of all the encyclopedias in our library! Try using this before you search the physical books—it can help you figure out which books to look at first, and will help you get ideas for topics or keywords.

➲ General Encyclopedic References (all electronic, available only via SU Lib website)

CQ Researcher
Credo Reference
Britannica Online
Encyclopedia Americana
Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia
Oxford Reference Online

➲ Recommended Encyclopedias in the Library

Encyclopedia of Race and Racism (Electronic)
International Encyclopedia of Environmental Politics (Electronic)
Encyclopedia of public administration and public policy (Electronic/Bird)

Web Source Recommendations

➲ Databases (all electronic, available only via SU Lib website)

Proquest
Lexis Nexis Statistics aka Proquest Statistical Datasets
OmniFile

➲ General Websites

see Ballenger pp 35-36, 82-83
Google
Spezify
Wikipedia