

[The Process of Research Writing](#)

Steven D. Krause, Eastern Michigan University

Version 1.0, Spring 200

The Project

I started writing this textbook way back in 2000-- that's right, seven years ago, based on the date for the publication of this web site. I signed a deal back then with McGraw-Hill and I began work on the project, thinking it would take me a year or two, tops. Well, a series of things happened, some of which were McGraw-Hill's fault, some of which were my fault. In 2005, I put together a "last chance" draft to send out for review. The reviews were not positive enough for McGraw-Hill's standards and I was not willing to revise anymore. Thus the project with McGraw-Hill was dead.

Originally, McGraw-Hill didn't want to revert the rights back to me for some reason. Needless to say, I was frustrated by that. But ultimately, McGraw-Hill did give me back my rights in the summer of 2006. That meant that I could send the book out to another press, but I wasn't interested in starting all over again with a different press and a different review process.

So I decided to publish this electronically. As long I don't make any money at this (which I won't-- see "the Rights and Fair Uses"), I can do anything I want with this project, and so this is what I'm doing.

Is this book any good? I don't know, to be honest. As I looked through it to prepare it for web publication, I can say that there are parts of it that still make me proud, there are parts that strike me as rather dated, and there are parts that make me cringe. This isn't the book I would write *now*; it's the book I would have written when I started this seven years ago. It isn't the book I would have written by myself because it changed a lot as a result of the whole textbook review process.

Would I do this again? Absolutely not. I was seduced by the prospect of making a lot of money, not realizing how much work this was going to be and how much time it was going to take. True, I did make a few thousand dollars, but I could have made a lot more money with fewer headaches if I had just gotten a part-time job at Starbucks for seven years. In the time it took me to write this book I could have written at least one "academic" book, one that would have paid me a lot less money but one where I would have been able to advance my career in more productive ways. In short, it was the worst decision of my academic career and the advice I have for anyone thinking about writing a textbook is to not do it.

But hey, live and learn.

I'm publishing it on the web now for two basic reasons. First, I wanted to make this all available electronically for myself and for others because I thought it might be useful. Second, I wanted to bring some closure to this whole thing. I am getting ready to start on a different academic project, and, for whatever reason, I felt compelled to "end" this entirely before I started something else. Now that my project is out here for the entire world, I think of it as being on it's own. Now it's time to write a new book....

Preface for Teachers:

The Process of Research Writing is based on the way that I have taught and continue to teach research writing to my first-year writing students. Before I developed this approach, I had used a number of other textbooks for this "second semester" first year writing course, but I was never completely satisfied with any of them. Most of the other books that I had used or considered had what I thought was an overly static and "product-oriented" take on the process of research writing. Typically, these books ask students in the course of a semester to write one "research paper," and, unlike so many of the books available for the first-semester composition course, they spend almost no time discussing the process of developing a research paper.

I see two major problems with this approach. First, everything that we know about writing suggests that writing is best taught as a "process," not merely as a "product." We can and should debate what we mean when we say "writing is a process," and I agree with those post-process theorists who argue that we don't have a general process theory that explains all writing situations. Nonetheless, it is clear to me that presenting writing as a series of processes that writers must claim and experience is much more enlightened than presenting writing as merely a paper assignment that must be turned in.

My second problem with the "write a major research paper" approach is that this doesn't account for the diverse ways that students actually use research in their college classes. There are courses where students are expected to write "research papers," but there are many more situations in which students are expected to incorporate research into their writing. Given this, it seems to me that teaching students to write one form of "research paper" is of little use.

So, as a result of the training in my Ph.D. program, my own research in the teaching of writing, my discussions with colleagues, and my own experiences, I developed the approach I present here. Instead of focusing on one research paper, I focus on the process of research writing through a series of shorter writing exercises. Students begin by having to carefully think about a topic of research for the semester and by developing a working thesis. They then write a series of shorter essays that explore that topic. All along the way, students are continuing to research and revise their working thesis so that by the end of the term, their thinking about their original topic of research has evolved. As a result, they are not only prepared to write a "traditional" research paper; they better understand what it means to conduct academic research, which I believe is the real goal of an introductory writing course.

Features

An Innovative Series of Assignments. As I mentioned earlier, the process-oriented approach to writing is at the heart of this textbook. Part II of the book presents a series of assignments that can be treated as individual essay exercises or combined to create a semester-long study of researching as a process. For example, instead of reading about or listening to a lecture about critiquing, evaluation, or antithesis, the assignments in Part II encourage students to actively engage with these concepts. Assignments include:

- The Working Thesis Exercise
- The Annotated Bibliography
- The Critique Exercise
- The Antithesis Exercise
- The Categorization and Evaluation Exercise

Integration of Technology. As someone who specializes in his scholarship and teaching on the relationship between technology and writing, I've never been satisfied with the approach most textbooks have to the use of computers in the writing process. For one thing, most research writing textbooks see technology as an "add-on," something to be discussed in one or two chapters and in isolation from everything else. For another, I think much of the advice on using the Internet to conduct research is frankly not accurate. In contrast, I began writing *The Process of Research Writing* with the assumption that current academic researchers—students and teachers—use computers to write and the Internet to conduct all sorts of research. I discuss using computers and the Internet throughout *The Process of Research Writing*, from "The Challenge of Researching on the Internet" (Chapter 1) to "Collaborative Writing with Computers and the Internet" (Chapter 4) to "The Web-Based Research Project" option (Chapter 11).

Student Models. I've provided model student essays for each of the exercises in Part II, and also for the research writing projects in Part III. These are "real world" examples that have come from my own students and experiences in teaching introductory research writing.

Organization

Even if you and your students do follow through the book more or less in the order it is written, I'd encourage your students to occasionally "read ahead" to see where this book is leading. For example, my hope is that Part One of this book, "The Elements of Research," can be both a good starting point for your students' research process and a helpful place to return as your students work through their projects.

Here is what you and your students will encounter in the coming pages:

Part One, “The Elements of Research,” introduces the basic parts of what academics tend to mean by research and the research writing process. Chapter One, “Thinking Critically about Research,” explains what is (and isn’t) research, the differences between primary and secondary sources, scholarly and non-scholarly sources, and the role of the Internet, and also how to evaluate the credibility of your evidence.

Chapter Two, “Understanding and Using the Library and the Internet for Research” provides basic information about your two most likely sources for research and evidence, your school’s library and the Internet. Chapter Three, “Quoting and Paraphrasing Your Research” explains how to properly use research in your writing to make your points. Chapter Four, “How to Collaborate and Write with Others,” offers ideas and strategies for collaborating at different parts of the research writing process.

Part Two, “Exercises in the Process of Research,” introduces a series of writing exercises designed to help your students to think about and write effective research projects. Instead of explaining how to write a single “research paper,” The Process of Research Writing breaks down the process of research into five smaller and easier-to-manage parts: the Topic Proposal, the Annotated Bibliography, the Antithesis, the Critique, and the Categorization and Evaluation essay.

Part Three, “The Research Project,” presents several different options for presenting your research project to your audience. Chapter Ten presents strategies for writing research essays. Chapter Eleven discusses three alternatives to the traditional research essay. The first is the “research writing portfolio,” which allows your students to assemble a variety of different materials (including the exercises you write from Part Two of this book) in order to describe and examine your research in a more dynamic and interesting way. The second alternative is “The Web-Based Research Project.” In this section, I explain the pros and cons of web-based research projects and offer some introductory advice on how your students can make their work available to an international audience via the World Wide Web. The third alternative, “The Poster Session Project,” describes an activity where students present their research to others with the use of images, video, audio, and other alternative media.

Chapter 12, “Citing your Research Using MLA or APA Style” explains the basics of rules of style from the Modern Language Association and from the American Psychological Association and how to properly cite research.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

First off, I have to thank McGraw-Hill for reverting the rights for this project back to me. I can't say that the relationship with McGraw-Hill was always rosy, but I did learn a lot about the textbook business from all the folks I worked with there, and I want to thank all of you for that education.

Thanks to the many readers who offered their review comments on my manuscript at various stages. Usually, this would be the part of the book where all those folks would be listed by name. But since we

never got to that stage, the reviewers are still anonymous to me. So hopefully some of you know who you are, and thanks for your thoughts.

I want to give a special shout-out/thanks to Laura Olson, the development editor for the last version of the manuscript McGraw-Hill sent out in 2005. As far as I can tell, Laura was the only person (other than my wife, I think) who read the book as closely and as carefully as I did. Actually, she probably read it more closely than I did. The advice and editing she offered in the last version of this book were great.

There are a ton of colleagues in the field and in the textbook biz I should thank, but the only two I'll mention for now: John Mauk and Nick Carbone, each of whom offered different pieces of wisdom along the way.

And of course I have to thank the hundreds of students I've had who over the years who have helped me develop this book, especially those who were generous enough to give me permission to rework their writing to present here as examples in the book.

Last but not least, thanks to my son Will and my wife, the ever-brilliant and inspiring Annette Wannamaker. [Be sure to buy her book when it comes out in summer 2007!](#)

about the author



My name is Steven D. Krause and I am a professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, MI. Most of my teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels explores the connections between writing and technology. Some of my recent scholarship has appeared in the journals *Kairos*, *Computers and Composition*, *College Composition and Communication Online*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. I've also given presentations at many different conferences.

I started teaching first year composition in 1988 as an MFA student. I earned a PhD in Rhetoric and Writing from Bowling Green State University in 1996. My first tenure-track teaching job was at Southern Oregon University, and I've been at EMU since 1998. You can learn way more about me than you ever would want to learn by visiting my various web sites, most of which can be found linked off of my homepage, stevendkrause.com

The Rights and Fair Uses



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Follow the link to the Creative Commons license to get the details, but what this basically means is you can share and "remix" any of this textbook as long as you give me credit as the author, as long as you don't make any money off of this, and as long as you are willing to "share alike" anything that you do with any part of the book.

If you are a student who has come across this site through some sort of web search-- welcome, and feel free to make use of the web site. Of course, don't just plagiarize/steal the student examples and present them as your own.

If you are a teacher or other writing program administrator-type who wants to use some or all of this project for teaching, feel free. Just give me credit where credit is due, and drop me an email to let me know how it goes.

Now, if you are a book publisher and you want buy this project as is, let's talk.... :-)