Activity: Concept Mapping

Introduction

Form a fuller understanding of your topic and strengthen your search strategy by creating a Concept Map. The goal will be to find as many concepts as possible that relate in some way to your topic. These related concepts will be used in various combinations to find academic sources through the library that support your project topic.

Instructions

1. On a piece of paper, write your research question (e.g. “what is the effect of climate change on the water cycle?”)
2. Identify the key terms(s) within your research question. (e.g. “Climate change” and “Water cycle”). Write them in the center of your page.
3. Start thinking about any related concepts for your key terms(s), and write them around the edges, connecting to the center with a line (e.g. environment, hydrology, natural disaster, weather, drought, etc.)
4. When you run out of ideas, start to use the Library’s Search Tool or online browser searching to find more concepts related to your key term(s). Wikipedia is a useful resource during this brainstorming phase of research, but should never be used as a final source for your projects.
5. Once your concept map begins to have 10 or more related concepts, start to combine these concepts with the key term(s) from your research question in the Library’s Search Tool. Use the search string operators from class, which can also be found on the Library’s Research Tutorial page: http://libguides.sait.ca/tutorial/gettingstarted
6. Reflect on which combinations get more useful results. Did any search results lead you to discovering more related concepts to use? Are some of your concepts too specific and causing less results? Which search operators are working best for you, which are not? How do you narrow or broaden a search? Are you getting any results that are not relevant to your topic? How can you fix this?