Getting the Most from Library Books

Use these timesaving tips to make the most of books you find in the Armacost Library catalog:

- Before you start searching, take a moment to brainstorm your topic and search terms. This will help you know whether your results are relevant or not.

- Always take notes while you search. Write down titles, authors, call numbers, subject headings, ideas about your research paper – whatever comes to mind.

- Read catalog records carefully.

- Too many results? Use the Primo Advanced Search to combine several search terms, with a Boolean AND in between them. Or use a facet to narrow your result set.

- Too few results? Brainstorm other terms you could use to search for your topic. Is your topic part of some broader idea that you could be searching on?

- Books are organized by subject, so once you find a book that is helpful, you can find more like it:
  - Open the detailed record in Primo and click the Subject links to find more like it.
  - Go up to the stacks and look at the books on either side of the one you want.

- Once you have a book, look at the index and table of contents of a book to see if it talks about your research topic. Think broadly – a book may not have a relevant title or subject heading and yet still contain the information you’re missing, in a chapter, a few pages, or even just a paragraph.

- Skim the introduction and perhaps the beginnings of chapters to understand the author’s methodology, theoretical approach, intellectual contributions from other researchers, etc.

- Use in-text citations, footnotes, endnotes and bibliographies to find more helpful sources.

- As you read through each source, consider how the author’s argument relates to your ideas.

- You can save catalog records and email the list to yourself for later. Or copy the citations into a bibliographic tool like Zotero.