

## **Exploring Your General Topic**

Prepared by Ann Humes

Once you have found a general topic that you feel will hold your interest, you are now ready to explore that topic by doing some preliminary research. At this stage your primary purpose will be to discover what aspect of your topic interests you most and what questions you can ask about it. Therefore, begin by doing some background reading to get an overview of your topic. Explore your topic by using one or more of the following sources.

### **Reference sources**

There are many basic reference sources you can check, such as textbooks, standard encyclopedias, and biographies. Your reference librarian can offer you other possibilities.

### **Periodicals**

If you wish to investigate something relatively current, reading newspaper articles may provide you with a concise overview of your topic. Also, current issues of popular magazines such as Time, Newsweek, Omni, Scientific American, and Psychology Today often contain general summary articles of major current issues and events.

### **Media sources**

In addition to written material, you gain insight into your topic through other media; try film documentaries, TV interviews, and indepth news analyses (radio or television). Also the Center for Learning Assistance Services has an extensive video cassette library.

### **Personal Interviews**

Another source for exploring your topic is the personal interview. Ask your instructor for more information about interviewing with first-hand experience or knowledge of your topic.

Remember that the primary purpose of this initial investigation is to find out what you are curious to know more about. Therefore, when you read or review an interview, look for statements that catch your interest and suggest questions. Look for ideas or concepts that prompt you to ask why or how.