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# Writing and Research

by Dan Poynter

Most of a nonfiction writer's time is spent in study. You must locate and read through all the relevant materials available in other books, magazines, newsletters, newspapers, interviews, museums, historical societies, public libraries, university libraries and special (law, medical) libraries. You have an obligation to your audience, to your book and to yourself to exhaust every possible source of information.

Today, in addition to the above resources, you have access to the Web, the world's largest library. You must spend hours and hours searching for both information and potential customers. Also, check to see if you have any competition for this book.

“The man is most original who can adapt from the greatest number of sources.” —Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Scottish essayist and historian.

Only you know how far back your research must go. If you are writing about parachutes, you will have to investigate back at least to 1495 and Leonardo DaVinci. If you are researching computers, three months may be far enough.

Whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction, you must check and verify every fact and resource. (You owe it to your reader, you owe it to your book and you owe it to yourself.)

History does not repeat itself. Nonfiction writers repeat each other.

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