

# Gaming Research Made Easy

.....a series of user-friendly tip sheets

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## Tip Sheet #3: Reference Materials for Gaming Research

Reference materials are convenient information products used frequently and considered as basic sources. They are not intended to be read in page-number order, but rather consulted at random for a special reason, usually to answer a quick question.

Reference books are important look-up tools, excellent for finding facts, citations or other special data. Two examples are Directories and Encyclopedias. Other reference books are: Dictionary, Almanac, Bibliography, Index, and Abstract. Keep this short list in mind and when a question comes up think first of the type of reference tool designed to answer it. By eliminating bibliography and index, for example, when what you want is a word meaning you will know to seek a dictionary, instead.

**Directory.** A directory is a contact list. It supplies two major things: Names and Numbers. They may be names of companies, organizations or people followed by address and phone number. The more useful ones also add new points of contact for the digital age, such as email address, or web site URL.

Casino directories are popular and can be found online and in print. Casino City, at web site <http://www.casinocity.com> lists casinos worldwide. The *Gaming Business Directory*, in paper, lists casinos in the U. S. and Canada. It also has an online version at <http://www.GBD-online.com>. GBD includes lots of extras, such as names of executive officers and department managers. Data also cover statistics on slot machines, restaurants, room count, and more.

You can find other directories in library catalogs and on the Internet using keywords, "casino directory". Other directories in gaming might list gaming equipment, gaming manufacturers and suppliers, or gaming regulatory agencies.

Sample directory questions:

- What are the e-mail address and web URL of the Bellagio in Las Vegas?
- Who is the CEO of Mandalay Bay Casino?
- Who is the Human Resources Director at Harrah's in Reno, NV?
- How many slot machines does Foxwoods (Connecticut) have?
- Who are the members of the Michigan Gaming Control Board?

**Encyclopedia.** An encyclopedia contains articles on various topics that have been researched by scholars. In gaming there is *The Encyclopedia of Gambling*, compiled by Carl Sifakis and published by Facts On File, a well-known provider of reference tools.

Another title, *Gambling in America: An Encyclopedia of History, Issues and Society*, by William N. Thompson examines not just games, but events, policies and laws. In both books you'll find entries for gambling terms, gambling personalities, brief descriptions of gambling games. Both have illustrations to assist with the explanations.

General encyclopedias, such as *Britannica*, *World Book*, or the *Columbia Encyclopedia* can be used for gaming information, too, but only in a limited way for these are general, all-purpose encyclopedias. Encyclopedias frequently show book lists at the end of each article, which you can consult for further information.

Sample encyclopedia questions:

- What are the rules of blackjack?
- What is compulsive gambling?
- What movies besides *Ocean's Eleven* were set in casinos?
- How far back in history does gambling extend?
- What does the layout of a craps table look like?

**Dictionary.** A dictionary defines words, explains their meaning. Entries in dictionaries are usually shorter than in encyclopedias. A specialized dictionary sometimes contained at the back of another publication may be called a glossary. A biographical dictionary (e.g., a *Who's Who*) can be used to identify prominent people and read short facts about them.

Gambling dictionaries and glossaries may be found in print or on the Internet at gaming-related websites. With a quick computer search you can probably find: Casino Glossary, Dan's Poker Dictionary, Lottery Glossary, Jai Alai Dictionary, Racing Glossary. The *International Dictionary of Psychology*, also online, contains gambling terms as they relate to problem or compulsive gambling.

Sample dictionary questions:

- If a gambler needs "aversion therapy", what does this involve?
- Who said, "A roulette ball has no memory"?
- In casino slang, what is a "toke"?
- What is the name of the building where Jai Alai is played?
- Do roulette wheels in Britain have the Double Zero?
- Where does the word "wager" appear in the writings of Shakespeare?
- What is meant by "Acey Deucey"?
- What is the educational background of Donald Trump?

**Almanac.** An almanac is a collection of facts sometimes in outline fashion or perhaps in tables and charts with very little text to read. An almanac-type publication may be known by other names, such as an Abstract, Manual or Handbook.

The simplest form of almanac is the Fact Sheet. Fact sheets are contained on the web site of the American Gaming Association at <http://americangaming.org> or the Nevada Gaming Commission web site at (<http://gaming.state.nv.us>). Gaming fact sheets can be found on the Internet at the web sites of gaming regulatory bodies that report gaming revenues. Check the website for each jurisdiction that interests you.

The *Nevada Gaming Almanac*, published annually by a private firm, lists each Nevada casino, its address, key officers, machine games and tables, casino square footage and other interesting facts. Almanacs may exist for other gaming states as well.

The *Nevada Gaming Abstract*, from the Nevada Gaming Commission, shows casino statistics for regions of the State (not individual casinos) on such topics as gaming revenue, hotel revenue, food & beverage revenue, and expenditures in various categories.

Sample almanac questions:

- Is the number of slot machines in Nevada near 50,000, 100,000 or 200,000?
- What important hotel/casino function annually loses money?
- In Washoe County, NV, what is the ratio of music/entertainment expenses to gaming revenue?
- What is the value of the fixed assets for Clark County, NV casinos?
- How much money was wagered in U. S. casinos this year?
- Who owns the Lake Tahoe Horizon Casino Resort?
- How many convenience stores, grocery and drug stores have slot machines? (NV)

**Bibliography.** A bibliography is a list of books, articles or other research materials on a specific topic. The list contains basic citations with identifying elements, such as author, title, publisher, and date. A bibliography may be enhanced by sorting the entries by subtopics or by additional data, such as content notes (annotated bibliography), library call numbers, ISBN (International Standard Book Number). A bibliography that lists online sources (web sites) instead of print books is called a weblibliography.

Often a bibliography is the starting point for gaming research. You discover what has been studied in the past and who the leading gaming authorities are. A mandatory step for graduate students and faculty writers is the literature review. Having a good bibliography to refer to can streamline and simplify the literature review.

Ready-made bibliographies and weblibliographies in gaming are hard to find. *Casino Gaming in the United States: A Research Guide*, by Mirkovich and Cowgill is an annotated bibliography limited to the publications of a few years, mostly 1985-1994. For materials before and after these years check the Internet or your library catalog, especially for materials limited to special topics, such as Problem Gambling. You might as well learn how to make a bibliography from scratch as you may have chosen an original area or a published bibliography may have to be updated for your needs.

Sample bibliography questions:

- Can you compile sources on demographics of casino players?
- What institutes publish gaming books and conference proceedings?
- What is the oldest book on gambling you can find?
- Can government hearings be included in your gaming bibliography?
- Who publishes transcripts of the oral histories of Nevada gaming pioneers?
- What instructional videos on playing various casino games can you list?
- What gaming theses or dissertations were completed in the last 5 years?

**Periodical Indexes & Abstracts.** We can group these two reference tools together because they are closely related and often parts of the same publication. An index is a finding guide with topics in alphabetical order followed by references to periodicals where articles on the topic are found.

Periodicals may be journals, magazines, newspapers, annual supplements or other items published on a regular basis under the same title. Typical contents include the name of the article, the publication, its dates and pages. If the entries in an index also include a summary of the article, that is called an abstract. Abstracts save time, letting you know up front if the article is relevant to your research.

Indexes and abstracts used to be the first stop on a wild goose chase, for after locating and copying the references, you had to get call numbers for the periodicals and try to track them down in the library. Today we have electronic indexes that make periodical access a breeze. The best combine the features of index, abstract and full text of the information. Sitting at your computer you can punch a few keys and make short work of what used to be a tedious task.

Sample index/abstract questions:

What is *InfoTrac*?

Would *LexisNexis* business database be suitable for gaming research?

What would you expect to find in *Westlaw*?

Would *NewsBank* be likely to index the *Journal of Gambling Behavior*?

What can you find out about *Dialog* or *Academic Search Elite*?

Does your library have: *FirstSearch*, *ProQuest*, *EBSCOhost*?

**For more information:**

*101 Most Asked Questions About Las Vegas and Casino Gambling* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Joseph, G., 2001. [For answering trivia and miscellaneous questions].

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