To: Entering MAIR Students, Maxwell School - Syracuse University  
From: Michael Pasqualoni mjpasqua@syr.edu || (315) 443-3715  
Re: Welcome from the International Relations Librarian

On behalf of Syracuse University Libraries, I want to welcome you into a world class program of masters level study, and encourage you also to recognize that alongside that enrollment comes access to a vast array of scholarly and professional resources in the form of traditional and electronic books, online journals, statistical datasets and more. Moreover, you have access to a subject specialist librarian and a slate of additional library services, all geared toward assisting you in your academic and professional success. A significant percentage of this material can be accessed from any computer or mobile device, either on campus or across the globe, at any time of the day or night. Just have your Syracuse University NETID and password handy, and in most instances be sure to begin exploration of these materials via the SU Libraries website http://library.syr.edu

Whether you have recently been immersed in academic research, or have not done so for some time, I encourage you to acquaint yourself with SU Libraries. Take a careful look thru the attached handout regarding research starting points mediated by the Library. Especially at graduate level, do not fall prey to the mythology that simply because so much information is online, this will mean difficult research problems will be more rapidly resolved, or relevant sources more efficiently located. That will be true at times, but the opposite may sometimes be true. And since emergence of Google driven keyword based information retrieval, we know in our lives of encountering information that so very often those research processes tend to involve wading thru far too much of what we do not require. Frequently, web-based communication emphasizes repetition more than relevance. But here too SU Libraries can assist you.

Your library research outcomes will be enhanced tremendously by habits as simple as wisely choosing the right one (usually more than one) search engine or database tool for the job at hand. And although keyword driven searches for source material are often successful and necessary, do not feel limited by that approach. For example, when compiling reviews of the sets of scholarly literature that refer to one another on a topic, you need not be limited by keyword queries. At graduate level especially, use of a major citation database, either Scopus or Web of Science, or both, alongside use of other search engines, databases and Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com), can be quite beneficial. The “cited by” references within those citation systems can contribute toward getting around the problem of retrieval of too many irrelevant search results. If you desire one large licensed database that includes a mix of news sources, opinion journalism, trade publications in international business or finance and also doctoral dissertations, together with many scholarly journal sources, I recommend ProQuest. If focusing very narrowly on topics of international relations, you might prefer the section of ProQuest called PAIS or the non ProQuest database CIAO (“Columbia International Affairs Online”), or a variety of large multidisciplinary scholarly article databases that are strong in international relations and political science content, together with closely related disciplines, databases like JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online Journals or Sage Journals Online. You will find the main A to Z list of all SU Libraries databases at http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/az.php.

Do not forget that you certainly have the option of systematically browsing, via the Library, specific journal and other periodical sources which repeatedly rise to the top during your research process, navigating to those titles frequently, and scanning recent tables of contents to keep in touch with research trends. Because graduate students often ask this, if you are curious about how to identify top ranked academic journal publications in International Relations, or Economics or Political Science, SU Libraries access to the database called “Journal Citation Reports” will show you those lists of top journal titles. While there will tend to be consensus on broad tiers of titles that are highly regarded and those less so, remember that rankings based on citation frequency can also be controversial. These impact ranking systems tend to discriminate against interdisciplinary titles, newly launched titles, as well as excluding coverage of titles whose perspectives may be more professional or journalistic than they are scholarly.
As you join this community as Syracuse University, you are welcome to explore aspects of the library system that extend beyond the confines of any one discipline. The Library’s Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) and Belfer Audio Archive, are home to some of the oldest forms of recorded information known to humankind. Bird Library building also houses a number of meeting rooms and team rooms, reservable by students, as well as loanable information technology, not to mention “Pages” the library café, one of the busiest on campus. Recently added at Bird, is a cross-campus research hub and consulting center intended to assist students with the launch of innovative ventures, known as Blackstone Launchpad. Participation in Blackstone services is by no means limited to business students, but extends into the nonprofit realm and various forms of social entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, for a bit of fun visual content specific to Syracuse University Libraries, you are also welcome to take a quick look at this time lapse footage of overnight studying at the Carnegie Library here on campus, shot during final exams week. That building was originally dedicated on Sept 11, 1907. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEJvoGbSUqE. Welcome to the MAIR program, and best of luck from Syracuse University Libraries.

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http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/ir