

PLOT YOUR COURSE FOR TRAVEL

WORKBOOK



“Reading old travel books or novels set in faraway places, spinning globes, unfolding maps, playing world music, eating in ethnic restaurants, meeting friends in cafes...all these things are part of never-ending travel practice, not unlike doing scales on a piano, shooting free-throws, or meditating.”

--Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*

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This workbook provides the information-gathering process as a model for St. John's students to prepare for travel abroad. This model can also be used to plan other major changes in life, including: preparing for graduate school, getting internships, moving to a new town, or getting a job.

Part of what we would like to emphasize is the importance of using the resources you have at the College: the Career Services Office, Meem Library, faculty, staff, your fellow students, and alumni.

This workbook is based on “**Information Search Process: A Summary of Research and Implications for School Library Media Programs,**” by Carol Kuhlthau. (*Published in SLMQ [School Library Media Quarterly], Vol. 18, Issue 1, Fall 1989.*)

It is a holistic approach to searching for information that includes thoughts, feelings and actions. The process begins with uncertainty and anxiety due to a lack of confidence and moves into an increase of confidence as one gains knowledge and makes a commitment to a focused perspective.

The information-gathering process involves:

- I. **Initiation** – Beginning the journey.
- II. **Investigation** – Brainstorming.
- III. **Exploration** – Exploring information.
- IV. **Formulation** – Forming a focused perspective.
- V. **Collection** – Collecting information.
- VI. **Presentation** – Preparing to present.
- VII. **Assessment** – Assessing the process.

As you are gathering information, please always keep in mind the importance of evaluating the information and its sources – who is the author, what is the bias, is the information verifiable and what is the timeliness of the information?

I. **Initiation** – The problem is introduced. This is the beginning of the journey.

- *Think about what you know and what you want to know.*

“I want to travel” *and* “I want to know what my options are.”

You began this search for information because you want to know more about something that resonates with you. Trust this.

You might do a bit of reading to learn about the topic or talk to friends or relatives who have traveled.

(Feelings: apprehension and uncertainty)

II. **Selection** – Identification of a general area for investigation.

- *Identify a general area for investigation. Try on different ideas.*

“I could work, volunteer, study or go just for fun.”

Talk to people who have traveled, read some books from the libraries, browse the Internet.

(Feelings: confusion, sometimes anxiety, brief elation after selection, anticipation)

III. Exploration – Explore information.

- *This is the time to explore, read and reflect to form a personal perspective or focus. It is the most difficult stage. You may encounter inconsistent, incompatible information and begin to doubt the appropriateness of your idea, the adequacy of your information sources, and your ability to complete the project.*
- *Remember you are exploring to find a focus, not to support a thesis at this point. It can be helpful to list ideas and questions while skimming a wide variety of materials rather than taking copious notes from one source.*

A substantial number of people give up after their initial search for information. A dip in confidence accompanying this stage is natural in this process. If you weren't ready, you will give up (but be deeper in the process should you begin again). If you are ready, trust that you will get through the difficulties and come out on the other side with a sense of focus. You'll be locating information and evaluating relevance, reading to become informed, and reflecting on new information. Ride with the uncertainty, your focus is coming.

(Feelings: confusion, uncertainty, doubt, sometimes threat)

A. ASSESSMENT – Questions

1. Why do you want to travel?

a. FUN/EXPERIENCE

b. STUDY

i. *What would you like to learn?*

ii. *In what language?*

iii. *Do you want your degree from a U.S. accredited school or would you like to try being an international student at a school abroad?*

c. WORK

Do a skills and interest survey to find your strengths

i. *Think about your interests*

What do you like to do? Think about experiences you have enjoyed. What kind of school, religious, social or sports activities do you like?

ii. *Make a list of 10 activities you have enjoyed doing in the past four years.*

iii. Evaluate those interests.

Think about what you liked about the activities. What challenges did the activities offer?

What skills do you need to develop further to continue in those activities?

iv. *Consider your skills*

Evaluate school, volunteer, work, or leisure experiences. Make a list of your school activities (clubs, organizations to which you belonged). Make a list of any volunteer work you have done (either through social, civic or religious organizations). After you have assessed your interests and skills, determine the relationship between skills and interests and possible jobs.

d. VOLUNTEER OR INTERNSHIP

i. *What sort of work are you interested in doing?*

ii. *What groups would be interested in working with?*

2. Where do you want to go?

- a. FOR FUN.
- b. TO STUDY.
- c. TO WORK/VOLUNTEER/INTERN.

3. How long do you have to travel?

- a. SPRING OR WINTER BREAK – Know the weather, local celebrations & traditions.
- b. SUMMER – Fun travel, internship, language study, work or volunteer position.
- c. HALF A YEAR OR MORE – Masters degree with semesters abroad or get a degree abroad.

4. How much can you spend? (Include travel and living expenses)

Consider travel costs & how long it takes to save more if you spend it now on a shorter trip; can it be divided up for more than one trip? i.e. one for summer, another after graduation?

5. Do you have a passport?

It's \$100 and takes 4-8 weeks. Start the process now; you'll need your actual birth certificate.

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_830.html

B. Skimming research – listing ideas

1. Campus Resources

- a. RESEARCH REQUEST: available from Career Services.
- b. PEOPLE who have done something similar: family, friends, faculty, staff & alumni.
- c. TRAVEL BOOKS: Meem Library, Career Services Library

2. Internet (beware of scams)

a. GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION SOURCES

See which one of these speaks to you and listen to what it says; don't try to learn it all at once.

- i. www.goabroad.com – *This is a good all-around travel site for students. It covers many of the areas you will need to research and isn't overly-commercial. Includes information on: study, degrees, internships, language schools, volunteer opportunities, jobs, ecoladventures, U.S. universities, teaching, scholarships, transportation options, insurance and phone information.*
- ii. The U.S. Department of State foreign embassies: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>
Includes information on visas, U.S. citizen services, current issues and warnings.
- iii. CIA World Fact Book: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
Includes maps, geography, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, transnational issues.
- iv. www.lonelyplanet.com – *Includes: information on destinations, online shop, hotels & hostels, bookings & services, videos, bluelist (hot trends), Thorn Tree Forum (bulletin board for travelers) & travel stories.*
- v. www.roughguides.com – *Includes: destinations, spotlights, travel talk, photo gallery, directions guides, phrase books, maps, podcasts and more.*
- vi. Rick Steves – *Europe through the Back Door*: www.ricksteves.com
Monthly travel newsletters, trip planning, travel tips, store, Eurail pass store and podcasts.
- vii. New York Times Travel: www.travel.nytimes.com. *Trip planning and booking, destination guides, restaurants, hotels, attractions and reader suggestions.*
- viii. Bug Bog: www.bugbog.com. *Photos, maps, destinations, festivals, travel directory, tours, bookings and more.*
- ix. *Exchange rates*: www.exchangerate.com. *A number of exchange rate web pages.*

b. FUNDING RESOURCES

Keep in mind none of the scholarships or fellowships are guaranteed. Try to plan for a trip within your means and apply for these as a bonus.

- i. <http://www.spo.berkeley.edu/fund/travel.html#Hum> – graduate schools and organizations that fund international travel.
- ii. My Travel Bug: www.mytravelbug.org – fellowship program
- iii. Study Abroad Loans: www.studyabroadloans.com – short term, semester abroad and foreign enrolled loans (for schools abroad).
- iv. International Scholarships: www.internationalscholarships.com – provides information and advice on international financial aid.

c. EDUCATION RESOURCES

You can enroll in a U.S. university and take a semester abroad or you can enroll in an overseas university as an international student.

- i. <http://www.studyoverseas.com/-graduate> – undergraduate and language study overseas.
- ii. International Student www.internationalstudent.com – covers practical aspects of getting visas, student discounts, etc.
- iii. Peterson's Guides www.petersons.com – study abroad search

d. WORK RESOURCES

Are you working for a career goal or just for the cash to travel more? Both are good options. Know what paperwork you will need.

- i. <http://www.dickinson.edu/career/international/backgroundinfo.html> – all sorts of information on finding employment, short/long term jobs, and offers searching by region.
- ii. <http://www.rileyguide.com/internat.html> – international job search, information on working in various countries, extensive info on France.
- iii. <http://www.travelandteach.info/> – teaching English abroad.
- iv. <http://www.wetfeet.com/> – international job search engine
- v. <http://www.frenchculture.org/spip.php?article396> – French Assistantship
- vi. <http://www.workandtravelireland.org/> – work and travel in Ireland.

e. VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Think about what timing options you have and when these would work best.

- i. www.idealists.org – volunteer overseas
- ii. www.habitat.org – Habitat for Humanity International
- iii. www.backdoorjobs.com – work, volunteer & intern
- iv. www.i-to-i.com – volunteer opportunities
- v. www.bunac.org/usa – volunteer or work
- vi. www.ocf.net/realbreak - Spring Break volunteer opportunities.

f. TRY BLOGS: Facebook, MySpace, Craigslist.

Read what others who are traveling now have to say.

3. Travel experts: For maps, travel guides, weekly slideshows by travelers, expert advice.

Local store: Travel Bug, 839 Paseo de Peralta, 992-0418.

C. Transition

1. Make a survey of your notes.
2. List possible foci.
3. Choose a particular focus, discard others, or combine themes to form one focus.

IV. Formulation – This is the most important part of the process.

- *You will come up with a personal perspective or sense of meaning of the information you have gathered.*
- *Your focus will be your guiding idea—the theme or thread on which to base the information you go on to collect from here.*

Resources + Time + Interest = Plan

(i.e. I have \$1200 and would like to travel after I graduate to a country where I can practice my French. I think I will try to find a job with the French government as an English conversationalist and earn a bit of money. This way I can travel during the breaks and perhaps after the year of work I will still have some cash and sense of where to go next.)

(Feelings: optimism, confidence in ability to complete task)

V. Collection – Gather information that defines and supports your focus.

- *Your focus is further clarified as connections and extensions are made from the information you gather. Your narrative takes shape.*

You will find it helpful to seek information to define and extend your focused topics, taking detailed notes only on that which pertains to your chosen focus and not on the topic in general. Expect to use a wide range of sources.

(Feelings: realization of extensive work to be done, confidence in ability to complete task, increased interest)

A. SELECT a program (study, work, volunteer) and/or start an itinerary (travel).

B. STUDY the country & language.

1. **Internet:** GoAbroad.com; paperboy.com; ipsnews.org; www.onlinenewspapers.com
2. **Meem Library:** Rosetta Stone language instruction; music from your country of interest; original language texts; articles in foreign languages (FirstSearch & JSTOR through the Library's website); atlases; Interlibrary Loans, travel literature & guides.
3. **Foreign Service Institute** language courses: <http://www.fsi-language-courses.com/>

C. DOCUMENTATION

See what you need at the State Department website <http://travel.state.gov>. Will you need a teaching assistant visa? Extended stay visa? Are both possible?) Search the program pages to see what sort of assistance they provide in getting the proper papers.

D. IMMUNIZATIONS

Contact the Center for Disease Control to see what sort of vaccinations and medications you need.

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentVaccinations.aspx>

E. INSURANCE

1. **Health:** Check your current health coverage policy first.

2. **Travel:** In case of cancellations.

F. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ID CARD

For identification and discounts (some insurance may be included): www.isic.org.

G. SECURE YOUR FUNDING

Don't spend it unless you have it. Have an emergency backup fund plan.

VI. Presentation – Complete the narrative and prepare to present it.

As closure approaches you draw the search to an end, frequently noting diminishing relevance and increasing redundancy in the sources of information you encounter.

(Feelings: sense of relief, sometimes satisfaction, sometimes disappointment)

A. APPLICATIONS

Work program; travel papers; insurance; funding; transportation & housing

B. ARRANGEMENTS

1. **Plane ticket:** round trip

Farecast.com, Expedia.com, Hotwire.com, BookingBuddy.com, Cheapoair.com, cheaptickets.com

2. **Housing:** couchsurfer.com; hostels www.hihostels.org; friends; family

3. **Transportation:** ground, excursions

4. **Funds:** will you have what you need in time?

5. **Emergency planning:** copies of papers, embassy contact

6. **Language skills**

7. **Health/Safety:** check travel advisories at the Center for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx or www.europassistance-usa.com/pages/health/health.html

VII. Assessment – Assessing the process

Think about where you are now as opposed to where you were when you started.

(Feelings: sense of accomplishment or sense of disappointment)

“The last step in a journey is often the first step on an even greater adventure.”

Madeline L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*

[If, at this point, you don't think overseas travel is in your plans, you can always journey within.]