

One of the easiest ways to work a current event into your research paper is to look for research covering similar past events to see if it can be related to what's happening now. Here's an example from 2015:

Imagine it's February and you want to write an essay on the Charlie Hebdo shooting that occurred in Paris just a month previously.

If you don't know much about your topic, start by finding a quick overview of what happened, for example on a news website or in a magazine. UBC Library has subscriptions to many online newspapers, such as The Guardian or the New York Times.

Once you're familiar with the details and timeline of your event, look for **similar** events from the past and consider how they do or don't compare.

One thing to remember: you may find many such events that seem similar – but you need to make sure that they really are comparable.

To find *relevant* past events, start thinking about the context of your current event.

Ask yourself:

- Is there a larger concept or category my event fits into?

With the Charlie Hebdo example you could start by using search terms like terrorists OR terrorism to get a broader understanding of the history and impact of terrorism over time.

Pay special attention to menus like these in Summon or other Library databases. If you click on the links under “Discipline” or “Content Type” you can focus your results more precisely on the topics and types of resources that you’re interested in.

Next, scan your results to see if you can find something from the past that shares some important aspect or aspects with your current event.

Ask yourself questions like:

- Did this event happen in a similar geographic area?
- Or to a similar demographic?
- Does it seem like the triggers or consequences might be similar?

In the Charlie Hebdo example you could look for past acts with similar motivations or targets.

Once you’ve chosen something suitable, try a new search using your keywords for terrorism and adding keywords for the specific past incident you’d like to research, for example: terrorism AND “Danish cartoons”.

Knowing more about the **history** and **context** of similar events can help you form arguments about **how and why** a current event happened - allowing you to tie the present and past together.

For help with this process drop by, call email or chat online with us at the Library. If you’d like to learn more about choosing topics and focussing your ideas check out our guide in the Research Help portal on the Library homepage.