Topic Development
This tutorial discusses…

1. Asking Questions about a New Topic
2. Freewriting
3. Brainstorming
4. Clustering
5. Developing Alternative Search Terms
Sample Research Topic

- Graffiti
  - Exit through the Gift Shop
  - Banksy
  - street art
  - vandalism
Asking Questions

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?

Adapted from The Brief Penguin Handbook, 4th Edition, by Lester Faigley
Asking Questions

- Who?
  - Banksy
  - Basquiat
  - Keith Haring
Asking Questions

- **What?**
  - street art
  - political expression
  - vandalism
Asking Questions

- Where?
  - public locations
  - walls, subways, train cars, other surfaces
  - larger, urban areas
Asking Questions

- **When?**
  - Counter Cultures
    - 1960s and 1970s
  - Rise of Hip Hop
    - 1980s and 1990s
  - Rise of Graffiti as Street Art
    - 2000s with Banksy
      - *Exit through the Giftshop* (2010)
Asking Questions

- **Why?**
  - artistic expression
  - public protesting of social and political events and figures
  - creating art in public locations
  - finding voice in disenfranchisement
  - memorialization
Asking Questions

- How?
  - etching or carving into hard surfaces
  - spray paint
  - permanent markers
  - stickers
  - knitting
Freewriting

- Set a timer for five minutes
- Write or type everything you know about your topic
- Do not stop writing or typing
- Ignore errors of spelling and grammar and particularly ignore doubt
- Examine what you have written
Freewriting

- Video of a hand model beautifully typing...
Brainstorming

- **Brainstorming** is thinking critically about and questioning your topic.
- There are several ways to begin brainstorming
  - Making a bullet-pointed list of observations and questions
  - Breaking your topic into manageable parts
    - General topic
    - Subtopics of interest
    - Terms, words, or concepts related to the topic

Adapted from The Writing Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, writingcenter.unc.edu
Brainstorming

- graffiti
- street art
- vandalism
- When did graffiti start?
- Bansky
- *Exit through the Gift Shop*
- political activism

- stenciling
- spray paint
- hip-hop
- Who are other famous graffiti artists?
- Is graffiti legal in large cities?
Clustering

- First, write your general topic in the center of your notebook page
- Second, write as many related concepts as you can think of
- Link concepts that seem to be connected with lines
- Notice clusters of interesting concepts related to your main idea
Developing Alternative Search Terms

- For example, if your research topic is *graffiti*, you might also try these words:
  - “street art”
  - tagging
  - stenciling

- Other related words you might try could include:
  - “spray paint” or “aerosol paint”
  - vandalism or “artistic expression”
  - “political activism” or “hip hop”
  - Banksy or “Keith Haring” or Basquiat
Start your Research at the KU Libraries Home Page

http://www.lib.ku.edu/

• Search library catalog for books

• Search databases for articles