1.5. COMPILING A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.5.1. Keeping Track of Sources

As you discover information and opinions on your topic, you should keep track of sources that you may use for your paper. A record of such sources is called a *working bibliography*. Your preliminary reading will probably provide the first titles for this list. Other titles will emerge when you consult reference works and the library's central catalog and when you explore the Internet. If you read carefully through the bibliography and notes of each work you consult, more often than not you will discover additional important sources. Your working bibliography will frequently change during your research as you add titles and eliminate those that do not prove useful and as you probe and emphasize some aspects of your subject in preference to others. The working bibliography will eventually evolve into the list of works cited that appears at the end of the research paper.

1.5.2. Creating a Computer File for the Working Bibliography

A computer is particularly useful for compiling the working bibliography. Create a computer file for this purpose, and enter full information about sources into the file as you proceed with your research. Whenever you wish to add new works to the list, to remove works you no longer think helpful, or to correct entries already stored, you retrieve the file, make the changes, and save the revised file for future use. As you research, you can arrange and rearrange your sources however you wish (e.g., in alphabetical order, in chronological order by date of publication, in order of relevance to your topic); you can also divide sources into groups (e.g., those already consulted and

those not yet consulted, those most useful and those less so). At any point, you can print the file to review it or to use it for research. Since bibliographic information is essential to researching and writing the paper, be certain to save this file and to keep copies of it on paper and in a backup location.

1.5.3. Recording Essential Publication Information

When you add sources to your working bibliography, be sure you enter all the publication information needed for the works-cited list. The information to be recorded depends on the kind of source used. See chapter 5 for complete guidelines on compiling the works-cited list of the research paper.

1.5.4. Noting Other Useful Information

Besides the data needed for the works-cited list, it is useful to add other information to items in the working bibliography. For example, if you derive a source from a bibliographic work, record where you found the reference, in case you need to recheck it. Also note the library call number, the network address (URL), or other identifying information required to locate each work.

The following entry in a working bibliography contains not only all the facts needed for the final bibliography (author's name, full title, and relevant publication information) but also information useful for research: the origin of the reference (the electronic database of the *MLA International Bibliography*) and the call number (PS374.D4 M38 2000). You will delete reference origins and call numbers when you convert your working bibliography into the list of works cited.

> McCann, Sean. *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000. [*MLA Bib.*; PS374.D4 M38 2000]

1.5.5. Verifying Publication Information

Whenever you consult a source, carefully verify the publication facts against your records—even if you have printed out or downloaded

the data. Add any missing information that you will need for the works-cited list, and correct any part of your records that does not match the data obtained from the work itself. Recording and verifying all the information about your sources when you first consult them will spare you many last-minute problems and frustrations.

1.5.6. Converting the Working Bibliography to the Works-Cited List

Eventually, you will transform your working bibliography into a works-cited list. If your working bibliography is in a computer file, edit the entries to remove unnecessary information (e.g., origin of reference, call number), arrange them alphabetically by author (see 5.3.3 on the arrangement of entries), and title the list "Works Cited" (see 5.3.1 on titles for other kinds of source lists). When you have finished the final draft of your paper, transfer the edited bibliography file to the end of the file containing the paper (see 5.3.2 on the format of the list).

1.5.7. SUMMING UP

If compiled with care and attention, the working bibliography will be invaluable to you throughout the preparation of your paper. It will, on the one hand, function as an efficient tool for finding and acquiring information and ideas and, on the other, provide all the data you will need for your list of works cited.