

Symsys 200 (Symbolic Systems in Practice)
Stages in Early Topic Development (2/3/2012)

Get exposed to a variety of current research through...

- department colloquia (like the Symbolic Systems Forum and Distinguished Speaker) – subscribe to the CSLI Calendar by email
- reading the course catalog
- browsing through books, journal volumes, websites
- reading news, blogs, etc.
- futurology resources (Institute for the Future, the Long Now Foundation and Future Salon talks, Slashdot and Digg, Wired etc.)

Think of topics related to your...

- goals
- interests
- special talents and background
- opportunities for success (time and place advantages)
- judgment of potential in the topic (e.g. figure out what people will need to know in the future, and create that knowledge for them)

Do background research on a provisional topic

- Get familiar with relevant disciplinary background through...
 - courses
 - textbooks and online tutorials
 - attending a conference
 - reference works (including online, e.g. web-searchable syllabi, collections of Wikipedia entries)
 - browsing the literature
- Get familiar with present state of work, look for a more specific research question
 - talk to faculty! (probably more than one)
 - survey-articles (e.g. in Annual Review of X, review-journals like Psychological Bulletin, or found through faculty advice or keyword searching)
 - sections of books, specific reference work entries
 - take courses in 2+ disciplines related to the topic
 - browse articles related to keywords searched for in scholarly databases and search engines

Define your topic as a challenging but feasible research project: the academic “vice”...

- constricting
- isolating something in order to work on it
- deputy
- sin
- “in the place of”