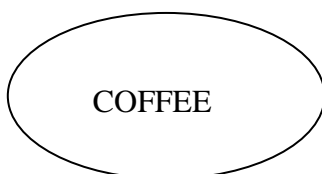# Planning for WRT Library Session

When doing any research project, it is important to determine your **information needs**.
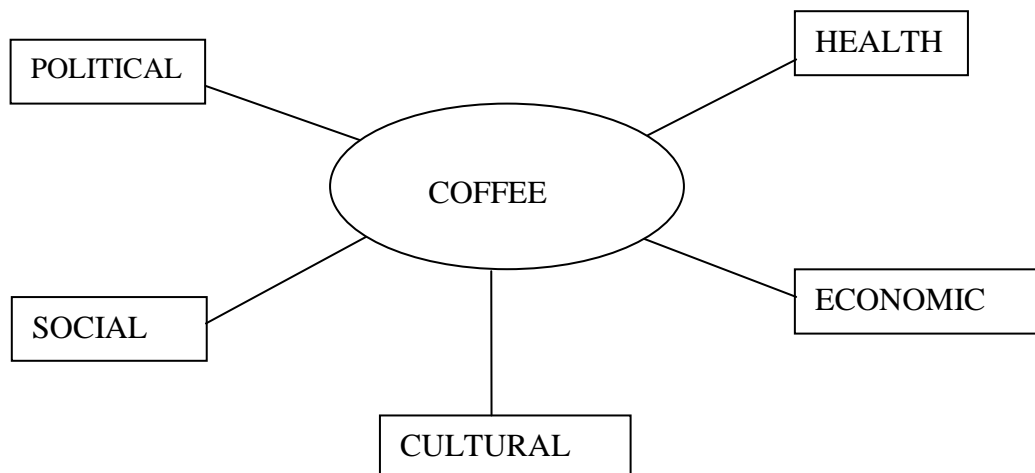- **what you know**
- **what you need to know**

A **Concept Map** is one tool, or strategy, that can help you graphically show your information needs. Concept mapping helps you create a visual design or diagram of your thinking, making it easier to sort, refocus and evaluate your ideas about the research you are about to do. A concept map can help you develop a **Research Question** from your research topic selection. This short tutorial/worksheet will walk you through suggested steps to take in order to organize your research before you begin searching for information.

If I wanted to research "coffee," I would put my **Broad Topic** in the middle of a sheet of paper:

COFFEE

Then I would extend my ideas to include different aspects about which I might know something. For example, the SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, CULTURAL, and HEALTH aspects of Coffee can be used to create **Restricted Topics**:

POLITICAL   HEALTH
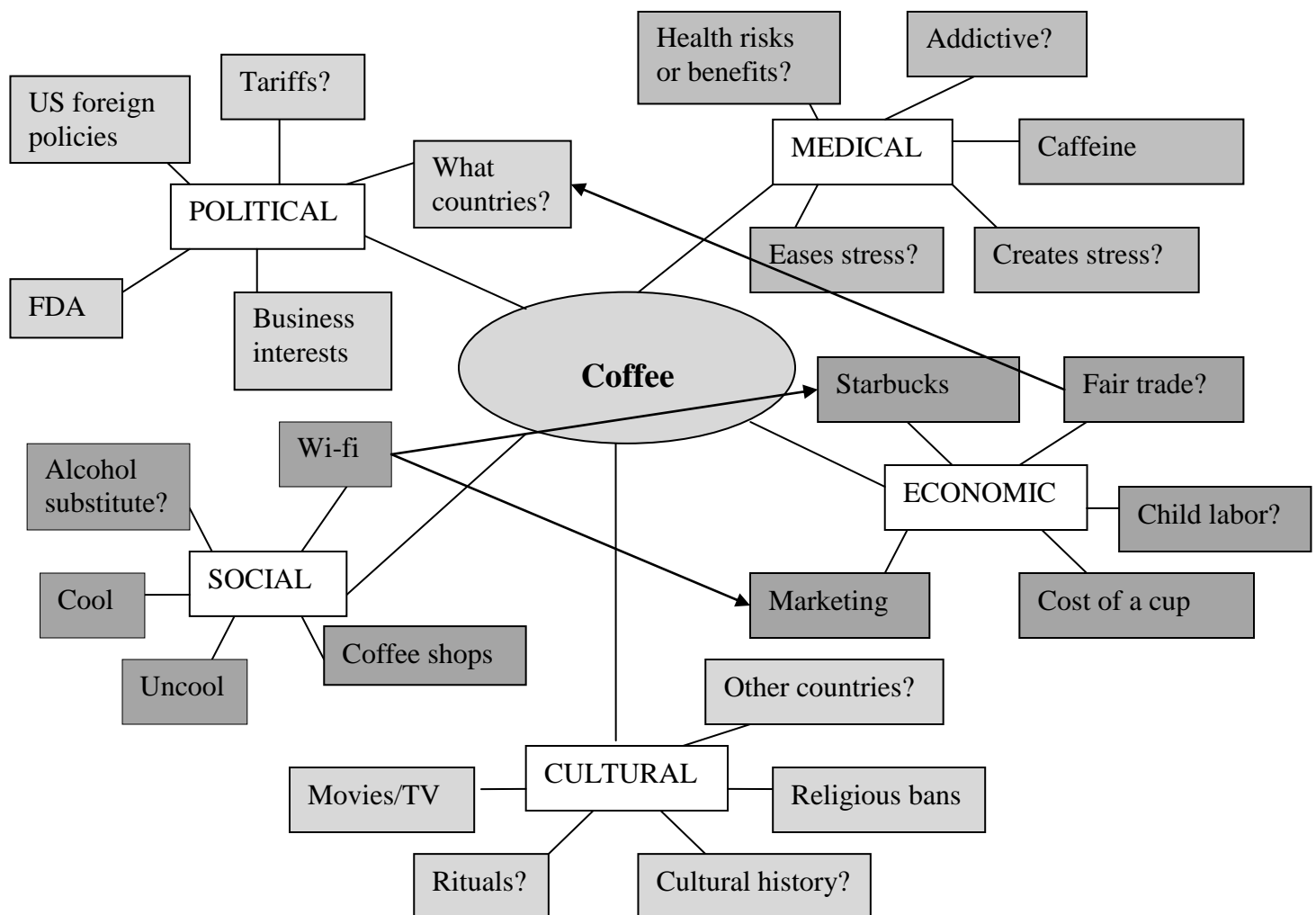
COFFEE

SOCIAL   ECONOMIC

CULTURAL

Now I am ready to brainstorm some things I know or things I want to know to fill in my Coffee concept map.

For example, these are some of the things I **know** and things I **want to know** about Coffee (**my information needs**):
- CULTURAL - I know that some religions forbid drinking coffee. *Why is coffee banned in some cultures?*
- HEALTH - I know that caffeine in coffee affects the heart somehow. W*hat are other health risks and/or benefits?*

- ECONOMIC - I know that a cup of coffee is really expensive. *What affects coffee prices so much? Do foreign companies we buy coffee from use child labor?*
- POLITICS – I know the United States gets a lot of coffee from some third world countries. *Do we trade with countries that don't agree with US foreign policies?*
- SOCIAL – I know a lot of coffee shops offer wi-fi service to attract customers. *Are coffee shops the new pick-up places or does free Internet access alienate customers?*

<u>We can fill in a concept map by thinking about our information needs.</u> When we think about a part of the map – what comes to mind? These are things you may already **know** or things you may **want to know**:
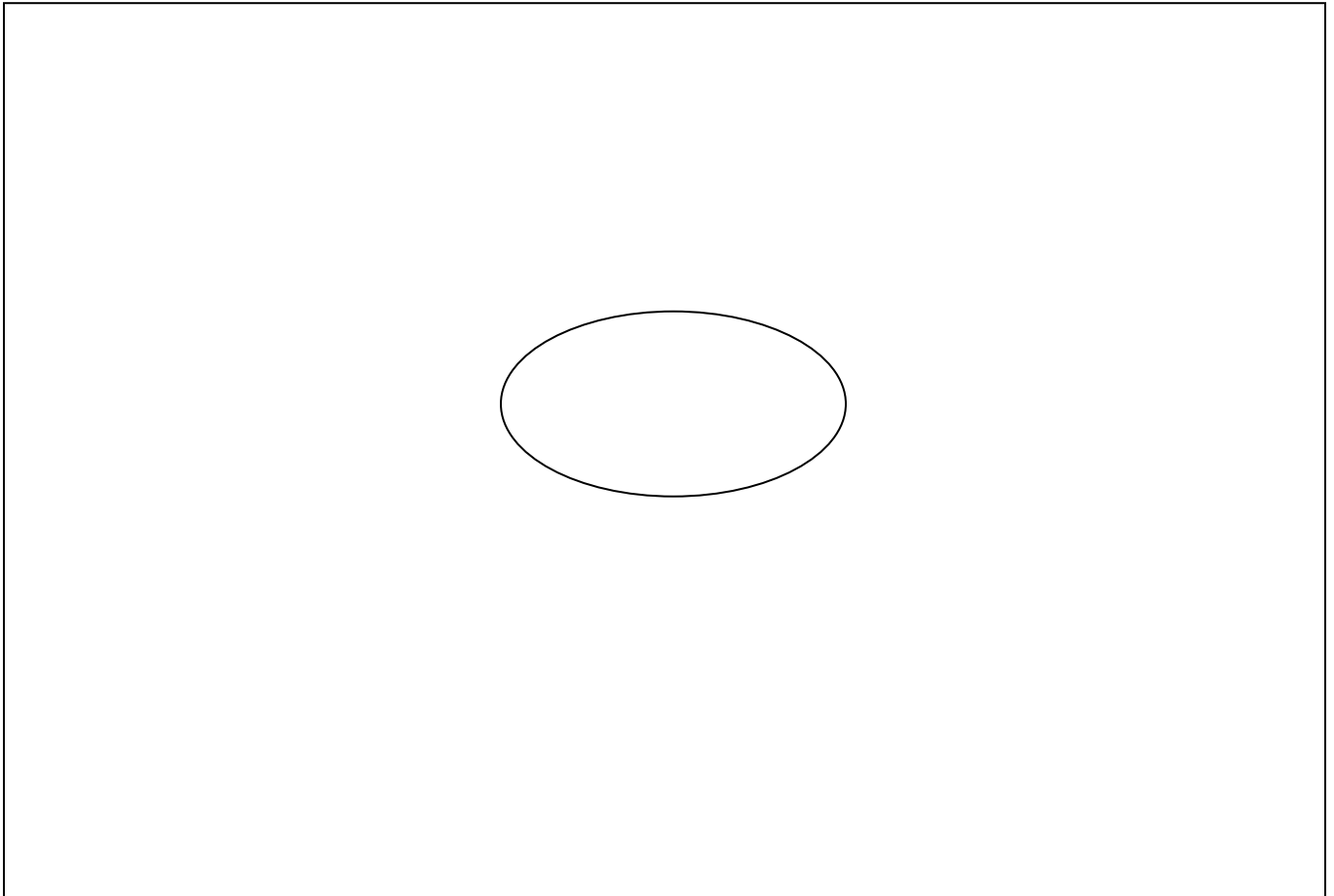

Making connections between topics (like those between Economic and Social above) builds knowledge! It helps you look at your topic in different ways and may help you refine your research.

Now try a concept map with *your* BROAD TOPIC

What do you KNOW?   What do you NEED TO KNOW?

Start by using this skeleton concept map – let your concept GROW! Try to make connections with your information needs.

Many times in research you need to broaden or narrow your topic to get credible sources for your information needs. Making a table of your concepts and connections can help you organize your thoughts and focus in on a manageable **Research Question**, one that you will attempt to answer in your research.

Review the following table to see how each **Restricted Topic** can be focused into a more **Narrowed Topic** and then to a possible **Research Question** – one that can be answered in an 8-12 page research paper.

Using a table to help organize concepts from the map:

Broad Topic	COFFEE				
Restricted Topic	**Political** aspects of Coffee	**Medical** aspects of Coffee	**Social** aspects of Coffee	**Economic** aspects of Coffee	**Cultural** aspects of Coffee
Narrowed Topic	US foreign policy and coffee trade	Caffeine and heart attacks	Coffee shops and Internet access	Coffee price fluctuations	Religious bans on coffee drinking
Research Question	How do US policies affect the coffee trade with third world countries?	Does the caffeine in coffee cause heart attacks?	Does providing Internet access increase or inhibit social interaction in coffee shops?	What are the factors that influence the price of a cup of coffee?	What is the rationale behind religious restrictions on drinking coffee?

Following the examples above, take one concept from your map and narrow the topic to create a draft research question.

Broad topic:

Restricted Topic:

Narrowed Topic:

Draft Research Question:

Bring your Research Question to the library with you!

Please be advised that you may need to revise your **Research Question** based on what is being said in the literature you find when you begin to search for information.

JK 1/10