Going from a citation to the source (known item search)

Using citations to find the items cited is essentially a three step process. First, the citation must be deciphered to determine what type of source is being cited. Second, one must identify a resource—a database or catalog for example—that provides access to or information about that type of source. Third, one must search within that resource, troubleshoot any problems that arise in searching, access the item and, if necessary, repeat the search in a different database or request the item through a delivery service.

Step 1: Identify what type of source a citation is pointing to. This step is crucial because the method of retrieving a source is almost entirely dependent on what kind of source it is.

Possibilities include:
Books (including essays in books)
Journal Articles
Dissertations
Newspaper articles
Government Documents
Unpublished reports
Webpages
Archives

Clues:
- If a city of publication is included then it is probably a book.
- If the citation includes “ed.” or “in,” then it is quite probably referring to an essay or article in a book.
- If the citation has quotations surrounding a title then that title is a unit of information (such as an article) in a larger publication (such as a journal, book or newspaper).
- If the citation includes issue or volume numbers or a day and month then it is probably citing an article in a journal, magazine or newspaper.

Step 2: Depending on the type of source being cited, use the appropriate method to find it. Listed below are steps for finding cited works in the most common sources.

Book: Search Franklin by title and, if that fails, by author (to make sure that the citation is not incorrect).
- If the book is held in LIBRA then use the place requests option to have it shipped to Van Pelt.
- If not in Franklin and the book was published before 1923 then try Googlebooks
- If the book is unavailable at Penn Libraries or checked out, make a Borrow Direct or EZ-Borrow request.
- If a book is unavailable through eBorrow Direct and EZ-Borrow then make an Interlibrary loan request.
Journal Article: Use the PennText Article Finder
(http://elinks.library.upenn.edu/sfx_local/cgi/core/citation-linker.cgi)
If no online version exists then be sure to click the Franklin option to search and for print versions. Many articles, especially ones in older or popular publications, are not available online.
-If the article is not available online or in print then make an interlibrary loan request

Post-1980 Newspaper Article: Use LexisNexis (http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/6973), Factiva Dow Jones (http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/8436) and Newsbank (http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/9433). One must search all three to make sure that it is not available online.
-If the article is not available online then make an interlibrary loan request.

Step 3: If your citation list includes sources that aren’t straightforward books or journal articles, contact a librarian for suggestions on which resources you should know about. Examples would include historical primary documents other than books; publications of NGOs, IGOs or foreign governments; pre-1980s popular magazines; white papers and legal cases; or television and radio broadcasts.