

PART 3: FINDING INFORMATION

Hello and welcome to Part 3 of Research 101. I'm Christy Stevens, and today we're going to focus on using library resources to find high quality information on your topic. Specifically, we'll focus on:

- HOW USING LIBRARY RESOURCES CAN SAVE YOU TIME AND HELP YOU SUCCEED
- FINDING ARTICLES
- FINDING BOOKS

CAL POLY POMONA'S LIBRARY WEBSITE

Cal Poly Pomona's library website links you to the high-quality online and print resources that your instructors expect you to use in your research projects, including books, articles, newspapers, historical information, music, maps, and videos. Some of our materials are in print, so you'll have to come to the library to access them, while others can be accessed online. What this means for you is that you can use the awesome resources that the library provides you with access to without leaving your room!

When you get to the library website there are a couple important things to remember. To find articles, you'll need to use a library database. To find books, start with the catalog.

WHAT'S A DATABASE?

Databases are similar to search engines, but instead of taking you to freely available websites that could be published by anyone, databases give you access to quality journal, magazine and newspaper articles, most of which are not freely available elsewhere. The databases themselves are not free either. In fact, the library spends thousands of dollars every year to give students, faculty, and staff access to this high quality information, again, most of which is not available for free. We are not paying for the entire world to access it, however, which is why you'll be asked to input your name, Bronco Number, and library password when attempting to access a library database from home. You'll be directed to create your own library password when you use the service for the first time. When you are in the library or on another campus computer, you can access the database automatically, without a password.

One thing to keep in mind is that databases are not all created equally. Some contain journal, magazine, and/or newspaper articles, while others have citations for book chapters, conference proceedings, reports, and other material. There are subject specific databases, that contain articles that only focus on psychology, for example, and there are multi-subject databases, which contain articles that are relevant to a variety of disciplines. Some databases include abstracts that summarize the article for you to help you to quickly determine whether it will be useful for your research. And while some databases contain full text articles, others only give you the citation, which lets you know that the full text of the article

exists somewhere, but you'll still need to find it somewhere else. Databases can also look pretty different from one another because the library buys access to them from different companies. Finally, each database covers different sources so it's generally a good idea to explore two or more databases to get a better sense of the information that is out there on your topic.

Although databases can look pretty different, keep in mind that functionally they are very similar, so learning to use one database will teach you skills to use in all databases.

SO HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH DATABASE YOU NEED?

First, go to the library homepage, and select the "Databases" link at the top of the page.

The database you select is going to be based on your topic and your approach to it. So if I'm writing a report about current treatments of schizophrenia for a psychology course, I'll want to find scholarly studies from a psychology database, like PsycInfo, for example.

In contrast, if I'm writing about a current event, I might decide to go to a database that contains newspapers, such as ProQuest Newspapers, since not enough time has passed for scholarly articles to have been written about it.

If I'm focusing on illegal downloading, I might go to a multi-subject database, like Academic Search Elite, which contains articles from a variety of disciplinary perspectives as well as general interest newspapers and magazines, where a lot of information on this topic has been published.

Still not sure which database to pick? You can always ask a librarian for a recommendation!

PICKING YOUR KEYWORDS

Ok, so now you've got a focused research question and you've opened up a database that is relevant to your topic. The next step then is to put some words in the search box.

Library databases are usually not as flexible as search engines like Google, so you'll want to think a bit harder about your search strategy.

If your research question is "is there a relationship between hip hop and youth political activism?" you can start by taking out all the small, common words that make it a sentence—is, there, a, between, and.

You'll also want to think about different word endings, since most databases will search for the exact word you typed and not variations on the word. For example, if you type in the word political, the database will only search for that term and will miss related terms like politics or politicians. Because of this, you might consider using a truncation symbol to search for all words that begin with a specific root word. For example, if I want to find articles that contain politics, political, and politicians, I would type in the root word politic followed by the database's truncation symbol. Many databases uses the asterisk as

a truncation symbol, so I'd type in politic*, but you can easily check to see what the truncation symbol is in any given database by going to the help screen.

Finally, come up with and try searching for a number of terms that are similar to your original keywords. For example, my research question uses the word youth, but I might also try searching for words like adolescents and teenagers to ensure that I don't miss articles that talk about young people without using the term youth.

SEARCHING TIPS

Now let's go over some additional searching tips that will serve you well in most databases

1. The first tip is to combine your keywords and phrases with the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" to improve the relevancy of your search results. You can do this either manually by typing them in or by using separate search boxes and selecting the appropriate operator from a drop down.

AND

Narrows a search because ALL terms must be found in an article in order for it to appear in your results list. You can use AND to combine different concepts such as "alcohol" and "advertising." In this case, your search results will only include articles that contain both terms.

OR

Broadens a search because the article only has to have one of the term. OR is particularly helpful when you are searching for synonyms, such as "death penalty" OR "capital punishment."

You can also combine Boolean statements.

For example: (university OR college) AND (athletics OR sports)

2. The second tip is to browse the article titles in your results list, and click on titles that look potentially relevant to your topic. Then read the abstract, or summary, to determine whether it's worth your time to read the entire thing.
3. Third, always look at more than the first page of results.
4. If you don't get many or any results:
 - CHECK TO SEE IF YOU TYPED IN COMMON WORDS LIKE AS IF, THE, A, OF, IN, IS, IT. IF YOU DID, DELETE THEM.
 - CHECK YOUR SPELLING. DICTIONARY.COM'S A QUICK WAY TO DO SO.
 - CHECK WHETHER YOU USED "AND" AND "OR" TO CONNECT YOUR KEYWORDS. SOME DATABASES WILL SEARCH FOR YOUR TERMS AS A PHRASE. SO A SEARCH FOR HIP HOP YOUTH POLITICS, WILL ONLY FIND ARTICLES THAT HAVE THOSE WORDS RIGHT NEXT TO

ONE ANOTHER IN THAT EXACT ORDER. TO FIND ARTICLES THAT CONTAIN THOSE WORDS ANYWHERE IN THE ARTICLE, COMBINE THEM WITH AND, AS IN HIP HOP AND YOUTH AND POLITICS.

5. If you get thousands of results:

- CONSIDER ADDING MORE SPECIFIC KEYWORDS TO YOUR SEARCH. SO INSTEAD OF SEARCHING FOR JUST HIP HOP AND POLITICS YOU COULD ADD THE TERM YOUTH.
- ALSO, DATABASES USUALLY HAVE LIMITERS THAT CAN HELP YOU NARROW YOUR SEARCH. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU ONLY WANT SCHOLARLY ARTICLES YOU CAN OFTEN LIMIT YOUR SEARCH TO SCHOLARLY/PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS, WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS FROM YOUR SEARCH RESULTS.
- YOU CAN ALSO TRY SEARCHING FOR ONE OF YOUR MAJOR KEYTERMS IN THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE. THE IDEA HERE IS THAT IF YOUR TERM SHOWS UP IN THE TITLE, THEN YOU CAN BE FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT IT IS ABOUT YOUR TOPIC AND THAT IT DOESN'T MERELY MENTION IT AS AN ASIDE.
- SOME DATABASES LIST RESULTS BY DATE, SO THE MOST CURRENT ARTICLES WILL COME UP FIRST IN YOUR SEARCH RESULTS. WHAT THAT MEANS IS THAT THE BEST ARTICLES ON YOUR TOPIC MIGHT NOT COME UP FIRST. IN MANY DATABASES, YOU CAN CONTROL THE WAY YOUR SEARCH RESULTS APPEAR. TRY LISTING THEM BY "RELEVANCE" IF THE CURRENT ONES THAT ARE COMING UP AT THE TOP OF THE LIST AREN'T FOCUSED ON YOUR SPECIFIC TOPIC.

FIND THE FULL TEXT

Once you've found an article that looks relevant to your topic, the next step is to find the complete article or full text. If there is a link to PDF Full Text, HTML Full Text or Linked Full Text, just click the link to get the complete article.

If there is not a full text link, click the Find It button. When you click the Find It button, you will be able to find out if the article

- IS AVAILABLE IN ANOTHER ONLINE DATABASE
- IS AVAILABLE IN PRINT AT CAL POLY POMONA'S LIBRARY
- IS NOT AVAILABLE LOCALLY. YOU CAN THEN REQUEST THAT IT BE SENT TO YOU FROM ANOTHER LIBRARY VIA DOCUMENT DELIVERY

It is very convenient when journal articles are available online in full text—but keep in mind that they are not necessarily the "best" articles for your research. Depending on your topic you might need to use print or our Document Delivery service.

FINDING BOOKS

When you want articles, you go to library databases, but when you want books, the place to go is the library catalog.

When you start researching a topic for the first time, you usually don't have specific titles or authors in mind. Instead, you're just trying to find out what books the library has on your subject. In this common scenario, a keyword search is often your best starting point.

If you've already formulated a research question, search for the major concepts in your topic, omitting all those smaller, less meaningful words that make it a sentence. In this case I'll search for books that talk about the relationship between hip hop and politics.

I'll then click on the title of a book that looks interesting to get more information about it.

You can see that my search terms are bolded and highlighted in red. This record also contains the table of contents for the book, which gives me a better idea about some of the topics it covers.

When you decide you want a book, check its status to make sure it's available, and then write down its call number, which tells you where the book lives on the shelf. This particular book lives on the 5th floor on the M shelves.

If you need additional sources, you can also use the catalog record for a book you found to locate more books on the same general topic. Simply click on one of the subject headings, which are just general labels that tell you what a given book is about. For example, if I click on the subject heading hip-hop, I find that there are 23 other items at the library that are related to that general subject. (click the subject heading in the record). To continue, click the "Hip Hop" heading from the list of subjects to view other hip hop related materials.

WHAT IF WE DON'T HAVE IT?

If the Library doesn't have the materials you want, you've still got a number of options.

If you need a book and you need it today, you can go to a library that allows Cal Poly Pomona students to borrow books, including other Cal State University libraries and libraries that participate in Link+. There's a list of these libraries on our website.

If you can wait 2-4 days for a book, you can use Link+ to request that the book be sent here from another library. LINK+ allows you to search the catalogs of a number of libraries in California and Nevada simultaneously and then to request material not available at our library.

If the book you are looking for is not available via LINK+, and you can wait possibly up to 2 weeks for the book, you can submit a document delivery request, and we'll expand our search for the book to libraries around the country.

You can also use our document delivery system to request articles that our library doesn't own. To learn more about these services, ask a librarian. Simply click the Ask-A-Librarian link on the library homepage.

CONCLUSION

We've reached the end of Part 3 of Research 101, so let's review what we've learned.

This unit focused on how to find articles using library databases and how to find books using the library catalog. We also talked about using Link+ and Document Delivery to access materials our library doesn't own.

To learn strategies for evaluating information, please proceed to Part 4.