



# LIBRARY RESEARCH

*Beyond the Basics in the Worcester State College Library*

(508)  
929-8027



CIRCULATION: (508) 929-8524

INTERLIBRARY LOAN: (508) 929-8523

ACCESS SERVICES: (508)929-8801

If you are using the Web to search for research-worthy material, it's easy to get confused between search engines and online/full text databases offered at a library's website.

Journal indexes and full-text collections are often called *databases*. These resources are generally better for finding:

- *Articles* from well-known *magazines, journals and newspapers*, especially if you need to cover a topic over a period of many years.
- Research in *primary* sources. Although some research journals are appearing on the Internet, the vast majority will still be in paper or in databases.
- *Specially packaged* or commercial information products such as *Academic One File, ERIC, Biology Digest or Psych Info*.

## *Semester Hours*

*Mon to Thurs:*

*8am-11:00pm*

*Friday: 8am-5pm*

*Saturday: 9am-5pm*

*Sunday: 1pm-11pm*

[www.worcester.edu/library](http://www.worcester.edu/library)

E-mail: [library@worcester.edu](mailto:library@worcester.edu)

*Betsey Brenneman, Access Services Librarian*

## *The most fundamental part of library research is developing a Search Strategy*

### Why Use Library Databases?

Since most scholarly information is *not* freely available on the Internet, you'll need to use Library Databases that index electronic versions of articles from traditional print magazines and journals – **these are the kinds of sources that your instructors expect you to use.**

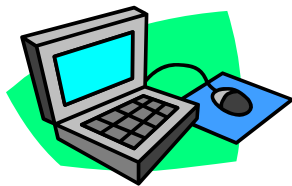


*Databases* contain highly specialized information, and are usually restricted to use only by members of the campus community. Most databases also allow you to put *limits* on your search. For example, you can choose to *limit* your results to only full text, and/or **peer-reviewed** articles so you can focus on material available just in scholarly journals. You can also view your search history and then combine searches for more precise results. Or, you can search using suggested subject *descriptors* that will limit your results to the *concept* you are searching rather than just random keywords that might return false references from unrelated subjects.

Results lists often separate references found in *Newspapers* or *Magazines*. This can be useful if you need information on a topic that is so current that not many scholarly studies have yet been published. Also, these sources can be useful for evaluating current awareness of your topic in the general population. These types of limits and ability to combine searches are not available from search engines on the Internet. You will only find them in library databases.

### Types of Databases

Basically there are three types of databases.



- **Citation only** databases list and describe the written material but do not contain the text of those works. So, to find the books described in the Library's online catalog you have to find the book on the Library's bookshelves. To read an article found using a periodical index, you have to find the journal issue that has the article.
- **Full-text databases** include the entire text of written works. A full-text database may contain magazine or journal articles, company financial data, or articles from an encyclopedia such as the *Encyclopedia of Science & Technology*.
- **Combination databases** contain bibliographic records for some items, and both the record and the full-text of other items. Reality check: not everything in library databases is full text. Many publishers do not allow the full-text articles from their print journals to be reproduced online because they believe it limits their ability to sell subscriptions.

## Selecting a Database – finding articles



There are many types of materials stored in databases and there are hundreds of databases available. There are so many, in fact, that selecting the best one for your research can be confusing. Searching for scholarly articles is a little like being a detective. You first have to know where to look.

- There are [Research Guides](#) on the Library Website that organize library subscription databases by **subject**, as well as listing the best of free websites in broad subject categories. If you can't find an appropriate database, look under [General/Multi-disciplinary Databases](#) for an index which covers many disciplines such as *Academic One File* or *Academic Search Complete*.
- Also try the Library Website for links to subject-specialized encyclopedias, dictionaries and handbooks on the Web: Click on [Web Reference Shelf](#) under **Quick Links** on the Library Website Home Page. The articles in **subject** encyclopedias are written by experts in the field and they also have great links to Web sites and published research articles for more information on your specific topic.

## Full-text Not Online?

If you've searched a database and found the citation [reference] for an article which is perfect for your research project – congratulations! But what if your article is not available full text? *Don't despair – you still have options:*



- Re-evaluate other articles you found. Another may be as good, or better. *Beware, however, of selecting articles simply because the full-text is online*; this is not good research practice. In fact, some non-full text databases do a better job of covering a particular subject area, such as *Psych Info*, *Medline* or *Cambridge Scientific Abstracts*.
- Don't discount a database just because it doesn't have full-text articles. You can still obtain copies of articles.
  - Check to see if the [WSC Library](#) subscribes to the print version of the journal.
  - Check to see if a [local library](#) subscribes to the print version of the journal.
  - Check to see if the full-text of your article is available in another [WSC database](#). Sometimes a journal that is not full text in *Academic One File* is available full text in *Academic Search Complete* (or vice versa).
  - If you have time to wait, ask for a photocopy of the article from the [Interlibrary Loan Service](#) at the Circulation Desk (average 4-10 days wait).



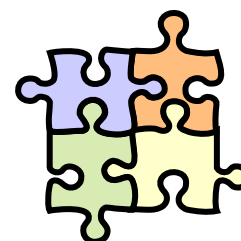
## Use the Right Tool for the Most Relevant Results

In addition to locating journal and magazine articles, *databases contain many other types of information that can be useful in your research.*

Source	Tool	Appropriate for...
Associations	<i>Encyclopedia of Associations</i> (Ref HS17/G334) or <a href="#">Web Reference Shelf</a>	Organizations and professional societies often publish scholarly studies on your topic. Directories listing such organizations can also be used to check the authority for sites you encounter on the surface Web.
<a href="#">Newspapers</a>	<i>Newspaper Source</i> (EBSCO), <i>Lexis-Nexis</i> , or individual <i>newspaper</i> and <i>media databases</i>	News and trade publications. Not scholarly, but useful for opinions, dates, current events, journalistic analysis, and latest trends in research.
Books (including E-books), Reference Works, Annual Reviews	<a href="#">Library Catalog</a>	More in-depth coverage or overview / background information, historical perspective.
State & federal reports	Research Guide for <a href="#">Government</a>	Statistics, agency reports, licensing requirements, printable forms (PDF) and guides (area studies for foreign countries), local statistics and links.

## Searching Tips

Expect to *revise* your search as you progress in the research process. Library research is a complex and ever-changing process.



- You may need to make a trip to the library to use materials or research tools that are not accessible off-campus. Remember, you want to use the **best** information for your research, not JUST what is available online from home.
- Allow time for gathering materials that are not available at WSC. The [Interlibrary Loan](#) service can borrow articles and books from other libraries, but this process takes anywhere from 4 to 10 days.
- Also allow time for reading, taking notes, synthesizing, revising your research strategy or conducting additional research as new questions come up.



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