CBU

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER
cultivating purpose-driven writers, communicators, & influencers
write + revise + persuade

Database Research
Joshua S. Fullman

The purpose of this article is to familiarize yourself with various databases to maximize your research capabilities. Using databases can help make those connections between ideas more efficiently and prompt you to develop your own thoughts. While it can be frustrating at times, good research is like solving a puzzle where the researcher tries different pieces until he or she finds the right one that fits.

Learning the Systems

According to Cicero, the first step to writing a paper is invention. Invention helps develop concepts, connections, and strategies through quality research. Many databases operate according to the same Boolean search parameters, making it important to be precise with the terms you use. If, for example, you're in public administration and are interested in urban decay, you will find countless books and articles on that topic – often more than you can possibly sift through. So, if you type in *urban decay*, you may want to include AND *urban planning* as a secondary search term. But since Urban Decay is also a cosmetics company, you will want to include NOT *cosmetics*. The more specific your search, the more successful your research.

Google Books

Google has undertaken a massive project of scanning every book in existence and offering it in digital format. Today, you can access Google Books for partial views of some books or the HathiTrust Research Center (HTRC) for others. If your topic is the Black Death, insert that search term, modifying it as necessary to add *bubonic plague* or *in art and literature* or *economic changes*. List books relevant to your subject, and then use the search feature within the book to find those areas that pertain to you. For digital books with a snippet view only, find a physical copy in the library stacks.

Google Scholar

Most databases require paid subscriptions for peer-reviewed articles, but Google Scholar is free to the public. Set your parameters to locate full-text articles or abstracts, specifying your date range or even narrowing your search to include articles available through CBU's Annie Gabriel Library. If you are in the nursing program and learning about transformational leadership, insert *nursing* and *transformational leadership* in your search terms. Some articles in Google Scholar, like Google Books, may not be available in full-text form if another institution owns them. If you cannot access the full article, save the bibliographic information and take it to the library for additional help.

Academic Search Premier

Powered by EBSCO, Academic Search Premier connects to many databases. But because of its wide range, it becomes even more important to set good limits in your search options, including full-text, abstracts, and/or clear publication dates. First, define what kinds of publications you want, whether primary sources, like government documents, or secondary sources, like commentaries or criticism. This

type of database works well for lower-class undergraduate students taking general education courses or those just beginning to learn a topic.

Databases by Subject

For upper-classmen or graduate students, familiarize yourself with more specialized, discipline-specific databases. By accessing Databases by Subject, constrain your search to one field, like accounting, aviation, communication disorders, education, etc. Some databases are more business-oriented, while others store only government documents. For example, Artstor is a standard database for artists and art historians, while Jstor is a common database for literature and the humanities. Check with your faculty advisor or librarian if you need help determining what databases are best for your research.

Tips

1. Be creative with your inputs. Finding the right combination of terms may take some trial and error.
2. Ask for professional help. Librarians are skilled in information technology, and they enjoy finding ways to assist students.
3. Save all of your citations in a document, spreadsheet, or app. This will save time later and help you avoid accidental plagiarism.
4. Record your research journey, making notes about what has worked, what hasn't, and what rabbit trails you need to follow later.

Works Consulted

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. "Searching a Database." 26 Apr. 2024, https://guides.csbsju.edu/general-research/searching. Accessed 17 May 2024.
North Hennepin Community College. "Basic Steps in the Research Process." 2024, https://www.nhcc.edu/academics/library/doing-library-research/basic-steps-research-process. Accessed 7 June 2024.
University of Sheffield. "How to do a research project for your academic study." 7 Nov. 2022, https://usic.sheffield.ac.uk/blog/how-to-do-a-research-project. Accessed 30 April 2024.
Zickel, Emilie. "Basic Guidelines for Research in Academic Databases." *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing,* Pressbooks@MSL, https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/csu-fyw-rhetoric/chapter/basic-guidelines-for-academic-research-database-searches/. Accessed 17 May 2024.