Research Databases and Online Searches

This guide is designed to assist you with all of your library research projects while you are a Commonwealth Honors College student, including your courses, Honors Thesis or Project, and independent research projects. Here you will find links to broad-based interdisciplinary scholarly databases that can assist you in searching for journal articles and published scholarly papers, as well as databases that include more alternative publications.

This page includes information about:

- Research Databases
- Online Searches

While the resources presented here may be helpful in beginning your search, keep in mind that librarians are your best friends in the research process. If you ever have a question regarding research or library resources, look for the "Ask Us" logo on the library website to get help from a University Librarian online, by phone, or to set up a one-on-one consultation in person.

Research Databases

Database Search Tips

You may want to begin your search with a general, multi-disciplinary journal database (such as Academic Search Premier). These databases cover key journals across a wide range of academic disciplines. Narrow your research with discipline-specific databases (for example, PsycINFO for Psychology sources). When you find articles of value, record the source in your Research Log. You can also email the text to yourself using a button on the database page, or save it to your RefWorks account (free of charge to all UMass students). Refworks is a valuable web-based tool that assists in managing citations, creating bibliographies, and importing references from online databases.

Journal Collection Overview

The UMass Amherst Libraries subscribe to more than 17,000 journals online. These databases not only include peer-reviewed professional journals; many databases also
include other professional journals, consumer magazines, and newspapers. Most articles and publications identified in database searches are available in full-text, full-image format. The libraries online resources are available at any time from campus computers or your own personal computer. (Off-campus users are prompted for their OIT username and password in order to access articles in most online journals.)

UMass Libraries Database Locator

Use the Subject List of Research Databases to access the full spectrum of online databases. Browse by title. Search by subject or keyword.

General and Interdisciplinary Databases
These databases contain articles from thousands of well-known scholarly journals across a wide range of academic disciplines. Most articles retrieved through searches on these databases have been peer-reviewed by other scholars.

- Academic Search Premier: A multidisciplinary database that indexes 8,600 journals in all fields. Coverage: 1975 to present.
- Web of Science: Provides a search by cited reference, topic, author, and more for articles in almost all important English-language journals.
- Google Scholar: Broad-based scholarly database. Off-campus users will need to login using their OIT username and password to access articles found in UMass Amherst’s online journal subscriptions.

Discipline-Specific Databases
Discipline-specific databases become especially useful as you narrow the focus of your research. They allow you to search a subject in depth from the perspective of a particular discipline. Use the UMass Amherst Libraries’ Subject List of Research Databases and Subject Research Guides to identify databases in your field of study.

Alternative databases
These databases contain articles from alternative or less mainstream news outlets.

- Alt-PressWatch
  U.S. alternative newsweeklies, covering issues like the environment, labor, public policy, and the peace movement.
- Ethnic NewsWatch
  Articles from the newspapers, magazines and journals of ethnic communities in the United States.
- GenderWatch
  Articles from scholarly journals and magazines about women studies, men's studies, evolution of the women's movement, transgendered community, (changes in) gender roles, femininity, gender differences, gender equity, gender identity, gender studies, and masculinity.

Help Is Available
If you have not conducted an online database search before, reference librarians are available to assist you at the Learning Commons on the lower level of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library. Other UMass Amherst Libraries resources include:
• Research Help
• Ask a Librarian
• While walk-in research assistance is available at the reference desk, you may want to schedule a more in-depth research consultation with a reference librarian in advance.
• Subject Research Guides - After finding the page for your subject or a related subject, explore the tabs near the top of the page – they usually include one called “getting started” or “research tips.”

Online Searches

Search Engines
Google is not the only search engine! Use search engines to search public-domain websites for research-quality information on your topic. In many cases, the material found through these indexes is either not copyrighted or of low quality. Be judicious in selecting sites. There are many new search engines using different search algorithms or other organizing strategies – for example, combining regular search engines and social media sites, or producing your results in a graphic or map form.

• WolframAlpha: A computational knowledge engine. It uses built-in knowledge curated by human experts to compute on the fly a specific answer and analysis for queries. It generates reports for anything calculable or systematized.
• Zanran: A numeric data search engine.
• Google Scholar: Broad-based scholarly database. Use within UMass’ IP range to access many UMass online journal subscriptions. In Scholar Preferences, you can choose to export citations to RefWorks bibliographic manager.
• INFOMINE allows access to university-level research and educational tools on the Internet. A virtual library, Infomine is notable for its collection of annotated and indexed links, including 26,000 librarian created links.

Search Tools

NoodleTools is one way to choose the best search for the information you need – whether you need to define your topic, learn the scope of your field, see related topics, find official government information, or find primary sources. This site should be used in conjunction with the consultation of a reference librarian for additional resources within the search domain you choose.

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