Locating Articles in an Online Research Database
Online Database

- While working through your CSU program of study, you will often need to locate journal articles for written response questions and research assignments.
  - The best source for locating these articles is the collection of research databases at the Online Library.
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- This tutorial will help you
  - Select the best database for your topic
  - Choose search terms and use them to set up a search
  - Limit a search to Full Text (complete) articles
  - Understand “Peer Review” and retrieve peer reviewed articles
  - Use other search options to improve your results
  - Review your list of search results
The first step in successful research is selecting the best source of information for your research topic. The following descriptions of the Online Library databases can help to guide your decisions about which database to use:

- **Academic OneFile** covers a broad range of academic subjects, including most topics of study at CSU. It is the best choice for journal articles about literature, history, and philosophy, and also contains several full-text fire science publications.

- **Business Source Complete** includes hundreds of thousands of full text articles. Use for business research, OSH assignments, psychology research, and articles on environmental issues.

- **Criminal Justice Periodicals** provides research information for CJ courses from more than eighty full-text publications in the field of Criminal Justice.

- **Wall Street Journal** is available in full text from 1984.
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- **Dissertations & Theses Database** indexes the abstracts of doctoral dissertations and master’s theses from the Humanities and Business disciplines, but numerous documents in the database are also available as full text content.

- **General OneFile** includes information on a wide variety of scholarly, professional, business, and popular topics. Several periodicals on fire science topics are available as well.

- **GreenFILE** primarily provides indexing and abstracts for a wide variety of materials on the environment, but it does include full text content for hundreds of articles covering numerous environmental topics.

- **Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center** is designed for researching opposite perspectives on current social and political issues, such as global warming, stem cell research, and immigration policies.
The following steps will help you perform a basic database search:

- Open your chosen database, and if the resource fails to immediately display the Advanced search, manually select the Advanced search option. Using the Advanced mode will allow more flexibility when searching.

- Consider your research topic. What are the most important words that you could use to identify and describe your subject? Those are your key terms.

- Type each key term into one of the blank search fields on the database search screen.
You will want to select the option “Full Text” or “to documents with Full Text” each time you search. **This step is most important!** It will ensure that your search only retrieves complete articles, excluding any material that is indexed in the database but available only as an abstract or citation.

After entering your search terms and selecting “Full Text”, click “Search” to create a numbered list of resources that match to your key terms. This list is generally arranged with the most recently published articles at the top.
Using the Business Source Complete database, these search steps are illustrated here:
However, a basic search may often retrieve more articles than you really want or need. The following suggestions can help focus your search results on your topic.

- If your key terms include a two- or three-word phrase, such as “information technology” or “fire protection” place the phrase within quotation marks in a single search field. The database then looks for the exact phrase, not the individual words.

- You can limit your search by date. However, this step is not always needed because the most recently published articles usually appear at the top of the search results list.
Sometimes an assignment may specify the use of peer-reviewed journals. You may select “Peer Review” at the same time you indicate “Full Text”, because a search can include several different limiting options at the same time.

How do peer-reviewed journals differ from other periodicals?

Peer-reviewed journals use a very rigorous review process to approve articles for publication. A board of experts in that specific area of study must verify that each published article meets the journal’s scholarly criteria.
Online Database cont.

- Why does peer review matter to your research as a student of CSU?
  - Sometimes peer-reviewed information is specified by the requirements of a research assignment, but peer review always provides you with an advantage that many articles lack, especially when the information comes directly from the Internet.

- You know immediately that you can trust the validity of peer-reviewed information and the credentials of its author – the article was already carefully evaluated before it was published.
  - Research that is simply retrieved from a webpage often lacks the details needed to identify its source and verify the truth and accuracy of the information.
Online Database cont.

- Using the Academic OneFile database, here is an example of a database search using these additional features:

  Phrases in quotation marks used as key terms

  Peer review indicated at the same time as Full Text

  Limited by publication date (this example will retrieve articles published in 2005 and since that date)
If you are still unsatisfied with your search results after following all the steps above, perhaps one of these suggestions will be helpful:

- Check the spelling of your search terms – the database may not offer spelling corrections for all misspelled words. This is often a problem when searching scientific terms or unusual authors’ names.

- Substitute a word with approximately the same meaning for one of the search terms. For the sake of example, “work”, “job”, or “career” could be used to replace “employment”.
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- Add an asterisk at the end of a base word to search simultaneously for different forms of the word. For instance, use `prevent*`, with an asterisk after the letter “t”, to look at the same time for
  prevent
  prevents
  prevented
  preventing
  prevention
  preventable

- Identify the most important concept for your topic and classify that search term as a subject. You will retrieve a group of articles that are all very similar, because they share the same subject heading.
Limit the search by document type. You can restrict your results list to articles, case studies, reports, essays, or other specific categories of information.

Remember – one of the most important details of a database search for journal articles will be limiting your results to “Full Text” or “to documents with full text”.
A database search that includes several of the options mentioned above might look like this in the Business Source Complete database:

Key term searched as Subject

With *ecolog*, the database looks for **ecological** as well as **ecology**

Full Text (complete articles)

Document type restricted to articles
Online Database cont.

- After completing a search, review the numbered search results list to identify articles that are the best match to your research topic.
  - To display the complete contents of an article, locate an icon labeled HTML Full Text or PDF Full Text. You will find these icons on the search results list or the webpage of publication info.

- An **HTML article** is a single webpage of the article’s complete text, with graphs, drawings, portraits, etc., accompanying the text as separate files.
  - An article in **PDF format** includes the image of each page as it appears in print. Graphics such as drawings or photographs occur in their original positions and the print article’s original page numbers are visible.
Online Database cont.

- If you have problems locating the articles you need or using the information that you retrieved, the CSU library staff is available to help with your research questions.

- You may request research assistance by telephoning toll-free to 877.268.8046 or by emailing librarian@columbiasouthern.edu.

Library service is available to CSU students as follows:

- Monday – Thursday: 8:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
- Sunday: 3:00 PM – 11:00 PM

All times listed are in the Central time zone.
Don’t be discouraged if you have problems using the resources at the CSU Online Library. All students initially feel baffled by research databases.

Like driving a car, database searching is a skill that improves with experience.

A new driver probably knows very little about driving a vehicle. But that individual gets behind a steering wheel for the first time, cranks the engine, and drives down the street – learning along the way. Soon this person gains the knowledge and experience necessary to capably operate a car.

In the same way, you will soon be more confident about your ability to use a research database.
Using the databases at the CSU Online Library will help to make you a more successful student!

Get to know these resources in order to be prepared for your research assignments, and don’t forget that help is available to you from the library staff.