What is a library database?

A library database is an online resource that the library subscribes to that contains articles and information from print sources such as magazines, newspapers, journals, and reference books. There are two different types of databases that our library subscribes to:

Article Databases

An article database enables you to search through thousands (sometimes millions) of different magazines, journals and newspapers to find articles on a particular topic. Some of the articles you will find are Full Text, which means you can read (or print out) the entire article right there online. Other times the database will only provide you with an abstract, or summary of the article. Other times, the database will only give you a citation, which tells you where you can find a print version of the article.

Reference Databases

Reference Databases provide reference information (facts, statistics, background information) from many different print sources. For example, we subscribe to Encyclopedia Britannica Online, which is an online version of the 29-volume set of print encyclopedias. Reference Databases are usually more subject-specific than the article databases, so that each one covers something like Business, Law, or Science & Technology, to name a few.

Databases are not "Internet" sources

Although you access our databases through the Internet, the articles you find in them are taken from published print sources. Most of the things you find in our databases cannot be found by searching Google or Yahoo. These are subscription services that the library pays for. They are every bit a part of our library’s collection as the books on our shelves, and unless you want to buy your own subscription, you must go through the library’s website to access them.

You must logon to use these databases

Because these subscription services are paid for by the library, you will be prompted to log into Blackboard in order to gain access. From the Library homepage, select the link “Find Articles and More” (http://libguides.wilmu.edu/librarydatabases) to be presented with an alphabetical list of databases to which the Library subscribes. Select the database you want use, and you will then be prompted to log into Blackboard with your username and password.

Wilmington University Library Databases

Databases come in all shapes and sizes, and choosing the right one for your topic is the first step in using them. For instance, you’re not going to find very much information on hybrid cars if you’re searching a nursing database. So consider your topic first and then select a database relevant to searching on that topic.
Wilmington University Multidisciplinary Databases

Multidisciplinary databases are usually more general and cover a wide range of topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database Name</th>
<th>Subjects Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master File Premier</td>
<td>general academic, arts &amp; humanities, social sciences, science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Search Premier</td>
<td>general academic, general interest, medicine, education, literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery(WorldCat Local)</td>
<td>Catalog of library catalogs from around the world</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some of the Wilmington University Reference & Subject-Specific Databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database Name</th>
<th>Subjects Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Source Complete</td>
<td>business database providing full text for more than 2,300 journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encyclopedia Britannica</td>
<td>general reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Measurements Yearbook</td>
<td>comprehensive guide to over 2,000 contemporary testing instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINAHL Complete</td>
<td>comprehensive source of full text for nursing &amp; allied health journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers &amp; Applied Sciences Complete</td>
<td>covers the spectrum of the applied sciences, including traditional engineering challenges and the business and social implications of new technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice Periodicals Index</td>
<td>provides research support for criminal justice, law enforcement, corrections administration, drug enforcement, rehabilitation, family law, and industrial security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Source</td>
<td>covers areas of curriculum instruction as well as administration, policy, funding, and related social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsycInfo &amp; PsycBooks</td>
<td>scholarly journal articles, book chapters, books, and dissertations, all in psychology and related disciplines, dating as far back as the 1800s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposing Viewpoints</td>
<td>pros and cons on a wide variety of controversial social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage Journals Online</td>
<td>provides access to approximately 460 Peer-Reviewed Full-Text Journals published by Sage covering the disciplines of Business, Humanities, Social Sciences, Science, Technology, and Medicine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SocINDEX</td>
<td>comprehensive social science research database with hundreds of full-text journals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which database would you use to answer the following questions?

What are the latest nursing techniques for a stroke?
What are some arguments for and against legalized gambling?
How have laws on inter-racial marriage evolved?
How many people live in Bangladesh?
General Database Search Tips & Strategies

Each database is different, so it may take you a while to get acquainted with a new one. There are some general tips and strategies you can use whenever you search a database. Later in the lesson, you will see examples of many of these strategies in our sample searches.

- Don't type an entire sentence into the search box. Think of the most important two or three words that deal with your topic. Remember, the more words you use, the fewer hits you will get, and vice-versa.

- Be flexible with your search terms. Think of synonyms, related words, and broader and narrower terms. Think of all the words other people might use to talk about your topic.

- Be careful with spelling. Computers do exactly what you tell them to do, so if you spell a word wrong, it doesn't know it. It's looking for exactly what you typed.

- Pay attention to which search field you are searching. Where is the database looking for your search terms? In a subject heading? In the title of the article? In the full-text of the article? These will all bring up different results.

- Most databases use a controlled vocabulary with official subject headings. This means that they've organized all the articles into topics with subdivisions, narrower, broader, and related terms. You can use these subject headings to get ideas and guide your search. This will enable you to get articles that are about your topic, rather than the ones that just mention it.

- On the other hand, sometimes it's necessary to use a keyword search to find your search terms anywhere in the article. Keyword searches should be used in these cases:
  - When the thing you're searching for is so rare (or new) that there are no official subject headings for it (yet.)
  - When you're looking for a very specific phrase. For example, there might be tons of articles that list diet as a subject, but you're only looking for things that mention South Beach Diet. This might be too specific to have its own subject heading.
  - Some types of articles (such as newspapers) aren't indexed at all, so they simply don't have a controlled vocabulary. In these cases, keyword searching may be your only option.

One technique that librarians and researchers use is to identify subjects headings listed for an article to get more ideas. For example, let's say you're looking for articles on low-carb diets. You did a keyword search on carbohydrates and brought up 5000 articles that mention them. The first few articles aren't really about your topic, but the fourth title is exactly what you're looking for. You look at the official subject headings for that article and one of them is High Protein Diet--Evaluation. You never would have thought of the phrase "high protein diet evaluation" on your own, but now you know the language (controlled vocabulary) that this database is speaking. You can use this knowledge to conduct a subject search to find similar articles.

There are many ways to expand or limit your search. (Expanding means you'll get more articles, and limiting means you'll get fewer articles.) Often, databases will let you limit your search to scholarly journals, to full-text articles, or to certain dates. You can also combine different search terms to get different results. This is called a Boolean search,
Boolean Searches

Boolean operators are words such as **and**, **or**, and **not** that you use to combine search terms. The operator you use will either broaden or narrow the results of your search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AND</strong></td>
<td>limits your search</td>
<td>cats AND dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cats AND dogs AND birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OR</strong></td>
<td>expands your search</td>
<td>cats OR dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cats OR dogs OR birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOT</strong></td>
<td>excludes specific terms</td>
<td>cats NOT dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AND**

An AND search says, find me articles that contain both of my search terms. Searches for **cats AND dogs** will retrieve articles that contain both the word "cats" and the word "dogs." If an article only contains the word "cats" but not the word "dogs," that article will not be retrieved.

You can combine as many search terms as you like, but it will limit your results even further. A search for **cats AND dogs AND birds** will only bring up articles that mention all three.
OR

An OR search says, "find me anything that mentions either this term or that term." Searches for cats OR dogs will retrieve all the articles that contain the word "cats", the word "dogs", or both. You can also add more search terms into the mix, with the understanding that this will further expand your search.

As you can see, using the Boolean operator OR will expand your search. This is useful if you are not finding many articles using the operator AND. However, if you are retrieving hundreds of articles you may want to refine your search and try using the operator AND for a more focused search.

NOT

A NOT search says, "Find me anything that mentions this term but not that one." Searches for cats NOT dogs will retrieve all the articles that contain the word "cats", but excludes from that list anything that uses the word "dogs." You have to be very careful when using this operator, as it will severely restrict your results and you may miss something important. An example of when to use NOT might be when you're looking for articles about spam (the lunch meat) and you keep getting things about SPAM (the junk e-mail.) You could do a search like, spam NOT email.
A Complex Boolean Example

Boolean searches can get quite detailed by using parentheses to separate phrases.

Let’s say the topic is: How does pollution legislation affect whales and dolphins?

We could phrase our search: \((\text{whales OR dolphins}) \text{ AND pollution } \text{ AND (legislation OR law)})\)

This will bring up articles that contain:

1. Either the word "whales" or the word "dolphins"
2. The word "pollution"
3. Either the word “legislation” or the word "law"

\[(\text{whales OR dolphins}) \text{ AND pollution } \text{ AND (legislation OR law)}\]

Most (but not all) databases will assume that you want to use the operator "and". This means if you type "whales dolphins pollution legislation law", the database will assume you mean "whales AND dolphins AND pollution AND legislation AND law". Unless all of these words are present in an article, the search will not retrieve any articles. In a case like this, the more terms that are entered the less results will be found.

Searching Ebscohost’s Academic Search Premier

**Academic Search Premier** is a good general place to look for articles on a wide range of topics, from business to social sciences to science and technology. Its biggest advantage is that it has thousands of citations as well as thousands of full-text articles. In addition, you can quickly jump to other Ebscohost databases or combine searches across different databases.
Above you will see the interface for all Ebscohost databases which includes:

- three search boxes,
- option to select different search fields,
- and “limit” options including “Full Text”, Scholarly (or Peer Reviewed) Journals, and a date range.

Now let’s do a search in this database on “multiracial” marriage. Enter the term “multiracial” in one search box and “marriage” in another. Your search resulted in 139 “hits”.

You can see the citation, suggested subject headings for narrowing your search and, in some cases, a link to the “Full Text” (electronic version of the article).
The Difference between HTML Full Text and PDF

Some databases will give you the option of reading an article in HTML (or just Full Text) or reading it as a PDF file. A PDF file is an image replica of the article exactly as it appeared in the original source. (In order to read a PDF file, you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer.)

The suggested subjects includes “inter racial” marriage, which, when clicked, leads to other, perhaps more relevant, citations. See next page.

I’ll open the record for item #2 by clicking on the title of the article.

Here you can obtain further information including an “abstract”, which summarizes what the article is about and subject terms (controlled vocabulary). Click on the link for “Full Text” to view the document.
How to Find Periodicals (or specific articles)

We've already talked about how to find articles on your topic. But what do you do if you have a citation for an article and you want to know if it is available full-text in another database or available in print through the Wilmington University Library? To find out if your desired article is available electronically in another database, you can use our “Library Journal Locator” database, located on the library homepage, to help you find these things.

Let's say you were searching Academic Search Premier and found a citation for an article that you'd really like to read, but it only gave you the abstract and doesn't have the full-text available. Don't despair! The article that you want is titled, "Framing Adoption: The Media and Parental Decision Making," and it's from the April 2014 issue of Journal of Family Issues. By using the “Library Journal Locator”, you can search to find out whether it’s available in on the library databases.
The results show that this title is available electronically in Sage Journals Online. Click on the journal name to find the correct volume and issue.

To summarize:

- What is a library database?
- Why is a library database not an "Internet" source?
- List some Library databases you would use to:
  - find general academic journal articles?
  - find current newspaper articles?
  - find biographical information?
  - find background information on a scientist's work?
- What is the advantage of using a (controlled vocabulary) subject search?
- In what cases would you use a keyword search?
- What do AND, OR, and NOT do to your search results? (Limit, expand, etc.)
- What do Full-text, abstract, and citation mean in terms of library databases?
- What is a PDF file?
- What do you use the Library Journal Locator for?