Beginners' Guide to Online Databases

from the ACM Library

C. Prezlock, BCC Librarian 9/2019
What are databases?

• Library Online Databases are **collections** of digital documents or records which can include:
  - articles from magazines, scholarly or scientific journals, or newspapers
  - articles in reference books, reports, government publications
  - Statistics and specialized data
  - Complete books in digital format (ebooks)
  - Videos

• These collections can be searched for reliable information in writing research papers, preparing for presentations, and other research assignments.
Types of Library Databases

- ACM Library offers a variety of databases
  - Articles (from magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals, etc.)
  - Online Reference Works
  - Collections of Ebooks
  - Specialized combinations
Articles Databases

• Databases of articles from periodicals: magazines, scholarly journals, newspapers, etc.

Examples: Academic Search Premier (EBSCO) Psychology Journals (ProQuest)

• The results of searches of these kinds of databases include references to and abstracts (summaries) of specific articles from various periodicals

• NOTE: The full-text of the articles may or may not be available (depending on copyright restrictions, date/time restrictions, etc.)
Reference Databases

• Reference book databases are collections of the articles within encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, etc. Online versions allow searching within each publication to locate specific information.

• Examples: Britannica Online

  Credo Reference (a collection of many reference sources)
Ebook Collection Databases

ACM Library allows users to browse available ebook collections.

• These are collections of digital versions of printed books. Most of these are non-fiction books that can be used for research.

• You can browse, read, print out, or save sections of these books from your device screen or you can download them to a reader device to use them for a limited time period. Each publisher has specific instructions.

• Individual ebook titles are included in searches of the ACM Online Library Catalog. A link to the ebook content appears in the catalog record.

• Example: Ebook Collection (EBSCO)
Specialty Databases

ACM subscribes to several databases that do not fit in the above categories:

- **Multi-format Information Databases:**
  
  Examples:
  
  - **Opposing Viewpoints** (Gale) which includes articles from reference works, periodicals, as well as viewpoint essays, primary sources, statistics, etc.
  
  - **Testing and Education Reference Center** (Gale) which includes career information, practice tests, etc.

- **Databases of videos:**
  
  Example: **Films on Demand** which provides streaming videos not available on the free web
Subject-specific / Multidisciplines

• Several databases are limited to publications according to subject.
  ▪ There are databases limited to health, education, criminal justice, psychology, sociology, etc.

• There are also a few multidisciplinary databases,
  ▪ Opposing Viewpoints
  ▪ Academic Search.
How to find Library databases?

• To access the databases that the ACM Library subscribes to, follow this direct link to an alphabetical list of databases. (If you are searching from off-campus you will need to log in with your ACM credentials.)

• Click here for a subject guide to the databases.

• Or...
Or, look for a link on the ACM Library web page
Choosing databases:

• The first step in your research process is deciding which databases are the ones that will give you the best results for the topic you are researching. Depending on your topic, you might need to search several databases to cover your topic. A librarian can help to suggest specific databases, so don’t hesitate to ask for assistance.

• **NOTE:** If you access a database from off-campus you might need to authenticate your status as an ACM student by logging in with your ACM credentials the same that you use for Webadvisor or Brightspace.

• **Reminder:** the Full-text of the article may or may not be available. See section below on full-text availability.
Choosing Databases Video

Click here for a video on choosing databases from Credo Instruct
Searching Online Databases: Tips

• Unlike Google, databases all require using combinations of keywords or terms to get results...They do **NOT** work with natural language questions.
  ▪ For example, a user **cannot** type in “show me research studies on the dangers of vaping" and expect a good result.

• If you are searching a topic you don't know much about, take the time to do **background research** to gather some **relevant key words**.
  ▪ Use an encyclopedia article or dictionary to determine possible terms
  ▪ Use keywords like vaping, "e-cigarettes", "electronic cigarettes" etc.
Example: Result List

This the first page of results from a search on vaping in the Academic Search database from EBSCO.

Keyword

Note number of results (items matching “vaping”)
Database search tips, pt. 2

• Databases allow you to manipulate the result lists
  ▪ by date
  ▪ by language
  ▪ by narrowing topics
  ▪ Look for subject terms or descriptors in relevant results.

• Advanced searches allow even more search features
  ▪ Specific authors
  ▪ Specific publications
  ▪ Boolean operators

• Be sure to click on the help feature or ask for help from a librarian.
Using Keywords Tutorial

• Here is a tutorial on choosing and using key words from Credo Instruct.
Database Search Tips, pt. 3

• Note other features to help organize and use your results:
  ▪ Print or email items for later use
  ▪ Use folders to save relevant records
  ▪ Be sure to keep track of author, title, dates, etc. so you can cite later
  ▪ Look for a “Cite this” feature **BUT** double check with citing rules before copying directly...many are incorrect
Example Database Search pt.2

Sample record from search on vaping

Click links to read full-text

Use tools to print, email, cite, etc.
Database Vendors' Help

• Databases are produced by various publishers. Two major database vendors for databases of articles are EBSCO and ProQuest.

• Each provides similar features such as basic and advanced search capabilities but have different looks and formats.

• There are good support features, so be sure to click on the Help links if you run into problems when using them. Or ask a librarian for help.

• Here is an introduction video for EBSCO

• Here is an introduction video for ProQuest
Full-text Availability

• Note that not all records in a database include the entire full-text of the article...some include only the reference and abstract (brief summary).

• If the full-text is not available in the database you will need to take the additional steps to obtain it.

  Complete an interlibrary loan request form for articles, available [here](#) on the ACM library web site.

  Or see below:
Forms for requesting articles from other libraries can also be found by clicking here:
Ask for Assistance

If you need individual assistance in choosing and using ACM online databases, feel free to contact a librarian:

- Cumberland Campus Library:  301-784-5138
- Bedford Campus Library 814-652-9528 ext. 6206
- Email libraryhelp@allegany.edu
- Chat

Look for the chat box on the Library web pages