Tips for Searching

About our Collections

The University of Liverpool library subscribes to many hundreds of commercial resource collections on the Internet, including collections such as Emerald (E-Journals), Springer (E-Books) and reporting systems such as Mintel (market Reports).

We also provide multi source tools to search across many hundreds of subscribed collections from a single search (e.g. Discover in the E-Resource area). However some collections must be searched individually since these are not searchable using multi source tools (especially for the Law subject area).

Some students ask why we cannot simply provide access via Google or a similar system. Google (and especially Google Scholar) provides a useful additional tool to search for scholarly materials. When accessed from the Library for Online Programmes, Google uses your University Login to open secure academic resources. However, Google does not include all commercial collections, nor can Google indicate if full text is available when viewing search results, so we recommend our multi source platform Discover as your primary search method.

Searching for Library Resources

You can search for electronic Library resources using the Library for Online Programmes designed for online students at http://libguides.liv.ac.uk/onlineprogrammes or the Library Web site http://liv.ac.uk/library (this site is designed to support on-campus use and physical shelf collections).

The E-Resources page in the Library for Online Programmes provides a range of multi source tools such as Discover to search many of our subscribed collections by keyword, phrase, title or author.

Our recommended Discover platform can be used to search most Library collections, including online books, reports, journal articles and conference proceedings. You can search Discover using the large search box in the homepage or E-Resources page in the Library for Online Programmes or from the left menu ‘Quick Search’.
You can see further multi source options to locate scholarly articles such as SCOPUS, Web of Knowledge or Google Scholar, you can quickly search these from the left menu ‘Quick Search’ or within the E-Journals area of the E-Resources page.

You can also search individual collections, these can be useful if you have been asked by a tutor to search a particular source such as Emerald, or if you are searching sources separately as part of your Literature Review or Systematic Review.

Search boxes are provided to search multi source or individual collections directly from Library pages. These search boxes include the large Discover box found on the homepage or E-Resources page, the Quick Search in the left menu and further boxes in the E-Resources page to search individual E-Journal collections, Data sources, Law sources, Theses and Dissertations or WWW sources. All in-built search boxes will limit your search to full text online results as far as possible.

In addition to the search boxes provided on the Library Web site, links are also provided to the homepage of individual collections or databases. Following a link to the homepage of a search platform or collection will provide you with advanced search options, but may also result in unsubscribed items or shelf items in the physical Library. If you cannot see the homepage link for a specific collection please see our A-Z list of Databases.

**Searching for Vs. Locating Resources**

When you use the search tools on the Library Web site you should be aware that there are broadly two kinds of search activity, including general searching for resources using keywords or locating particular (known) resources where you have either been asked to read a resource or found a reference to a particular resource (e.g. on the Internet) and need to locate this.

**Searching for Resources**

You may need to perform a broad search for resources on a particular topic. This can be achieved using related keywords, phrases or more specific details; for example, we could search for “international British petroleum industry strategy” across a range of resource types, including E-Journal articles, E-Books, Reports & Data, Theses and Dissertations or Internet Resources. There are various reasons why you will need to search for resources. You could be searching for general background information on your course subject area, or you may need to search for information on a specific topic (such as researching a particular industry for a class discussion question), additionally you will need to search for reading material and background information for your chosen dissertation topic (your ‘literature review’).

**Locating Resources**

You may be asked to read a particular E-Journal article, E-Book, report or other resource, as part of a required or recommended reading list or during class. You may be provided with a direct link to the resource or you may need to locate this
resource yourself using the search tools on the Library Web. Additionally, you may
discover details about a resource on the Internet or using search tools on the Library
Web site and may need to locate that particular resource. When this happens, you
should note down as details as possible about the resource and then use the tools
provided within the Library Web site to locate your required document.

Go Direct to an Article, E-Book or Database/ Collection

The Library Web site provides tools to check if a particular resource is available. In
the left menu you can see a pull-down ‘Quick Search’ tool, this allows you to quickly
check if a particular E-Book title or article title is available. You can also enter the full
journal citation details using the ‘Go to an article / citation finder’ in the left menu, this
provides a definitive tool to access a specific article and will indicate if the item is
subscribed amongst all our subscriptions on the Internet.

Some general guidance on how to use the Library

When searching for resources you should consider the purpose of the search and
select appropriate search tools available on the Library Web site. You should use the
Library slightly differently depending on your current aims:

• If you are searching for general background materials on your programme
area you may wish to begin by searching for E-Books to read about your
chosen subject area. When performing a broad search on materials for your
programme area you will need to search using keywords which match the
broad topics you are studying, for example if you are studying Public Health
you could use the E-Book search tools for books on this topic, but you may
also wish to search for keywords related to the broad aspects of the
programme or subject area, such as “Public health epidemiology”, “qualitative
methods public health”, “public health promotion” etc.

• If you are performing a search for a particular assignment or discussion
question you should consult a range of information sources, including E-
Books, E-Journal articles and Reports and Data. However, for information on
a very specific professional or scholarly area or for the most recent
developments in the relevant field, you may need to focus on E-Journal article
and Reports, since these will likely contain a greater degree of recent
discussion and writing than Books. You will need to use a more focused
search using keywords or phrases which match the topic you are searching
for, for example if you have been asked to research the British petroleum
industry and industrial strategies you could try a range of keywords related to
this topic such as “British petroleum industry strategy”.

• If you are searching for background material for your dissertation you should
consult a wide range of resource types/ formats, including Theses and
Dissertations, E-Books, Reports and Data, E-Journal articles and other
sources, such as the Internet and scholarly repositories. Further sections of
this tutorial will introduce searching these resource types.
Regardless of the aims of your research, you should begin searching using multi source search tools. Using multi source tools can provide a rapid overview of E-Resources available across our subscribed collections. However if you are unable to obtain satisfactory results using the multi source tools, you can also search individual collections or sources. Multi source search tools are unavailable in some parts of the Library for Online Programmes (such as Law, Data, Theses and Dissertations), in these cases you will need to use the search boxes available to search individual collections or follow links to search individual collections from their homepage.

### Summary of Search Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task or Activity</th>
<th>Primary formats/sources</th>
<th>Secondary formats/sources</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General background materials on your programme area</td>
<td>E-Books</td>
<td>E-Journals, WWW sources</td>
<td>You may wish to search for keywords related to the broad aspects of the programme or subject area, such as “Public health epidemiology”, “qualitative methods public health”, “public health promotion” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment or discussion question</td>
<td>E-Journals, Reports &amp; Data, Specialist sources (e.g. Law, Clinical trials reports).</td>
<td>WWW sources, E-Books</td>
<td>You will need to use a more focused search using keywords or phrases which match the topic you are searching for, for example if you have been asked to research the British petroleum industry and industrial strategies you could try a range of keywords related to this topic such as “British petroleum industry strategy”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background material for your dissertation</td>
<td>All sources : Theses and Dissertations, E-Books, Reports and Data, E-Journal articles, WWW sources, scholarly repositories etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Suggestions for Keywords and Search Options:

When using search tools or links to external collections, you should consider the 'keywords' you will use to search for articles, E-Books etc. Using keywords which accurately describe the topic you are researching will produce better results than general keywords which describe only your broad area of study or broad area of writing.
• To search for a topic or subject area, you should use keywords or phrases which relate to the area you are searching for, you can also usually omit connecting words such as 'and', 'in', 'the' etc. For example, if we wish to search for "Systems design factors in the telecommunications industry", keywords could include: "Systems design factors telecommunications industry". We can use this search phrase or query to search for resources in a range of search systems and collections.

• When selecting keywords to search, avoid being too general as you may retrieve too many search results, but also, try not to be too specific as you may miss relevant information, for example, searching for "business management" will produce results on a wide range of business and management topics, but "business management pharmaceutical sector" will produce more specific results for the sector being described in the keywords.

• Limit your search to a specific field. Most databases will allow you to refine your search so it only searches in a specific field, such as the title, author, keyword etc.

• You can also often limit your search to only scholarly (peer reviewed) journals. Scholarly/professional journals are primary sources of information through which new research is made known.

• You can often limit your search by publication type. Most search systems have a variety of publication types - journal article, book, review, conference proceeding, working paper, company report, letter, editorial etc.

• You can also often limit your search by publication date or language.

• Use similar words. For example, if you are searching for references to 'intelligent computer systems', you could also try searching for similar words such as 'artificial intelligence' etc.

• Think about American spellings, for example, color/colour, and abbreviations, for example, electronic business/e-business/ebusiness or World Wide Web/WWW. Also think about the terminology used in different countries, for example, primary education - UK terminology/elementary education - US terminology.

• Try another search system. If you have only searched one search tool it could be that you need to search other Library systems to find relevant results. It is always advisable to search more than one search tool to ensure you have a wide coverage of the literature available.

• You can also use advanced 'operators' when searching from the homepage of individual collections/platforms, for example you could specify “Management systems NOT human resources” to obtain results on management systems, but exclude results containing ‘human resources’. Other operators include ‘OR’ to specify two searchable keyword phrases and ‘AND’ to search for a
number of terms (most search systems automatically add ‘AND’ between words used in your search).

The following table illustrates typical search operators and techniques, you should note that some search systems have specific uses for operators or may have their own local operator codes. You can see how these work in more detail by reading the Help resources within these individual systems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>How it works</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td>Add ‘and’ between words to ensure multiple words are included in the search, you should note however that most search systems automatically add ‘and’ between your keywords.</td>
<td>management AND systems AND design</td>
<td>Only articles where all these words are present will be searched, although not necessarily in this order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT</td>
<td>Add ‘not’ to exclude words from your search.</td>
<td>management not planning development</td>
<td>Only articles which contain ‘management’ will be retrieved, but those containing the term ‘planning development’ will be excluded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Add ‘or’ to search for multiple keyword phrases.</td>
<td>Management systems or management design</td>
<td>Only articles which contain the phrase management systems or management design will be retrieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>The ‘wildcard’ can often be used to ‘guess’ missing text.</td>
<td>system* design</td>
<td>Any articles which contain versions of the word system and design will be retrieved, e.g. system design, systems design, systemized design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“”</td>
<td>Quotation marks can be used to force a literal phrase or expression.</td>
<td>“systems design methodology”</td>
<td>Only articles which contain this literal phrase will be retrieved, excluding articles which may contain all three words but not the exact arrangement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You should note that these operators are designed for use when searching from the homepage of individual collections/platforms, and are not supported when using search boxes shown directly on Library Web pages, as these search boxes already use an inherent ‘AND’ operator in many cases.

**Opening Full Text links**

We provide a wide range of collections and search platforms to search for online resources. When you follow a 'Full text' link from one of these search systems you may be immediately directed to the full text article in PDF format, or you may be directed to an intermediate 'Is it @ Liverpool' [is it @ Liverpool?](#) screen containing details about the resource. If this screen shows 'Full text not available' this means it
is unlikely we have access to the resource via our subscription systems, however if a link is shown for the resource, followed by a ‘Go’ button, you should follow this button to open the full text version of the document.

NOTE: we do not hold subscriptions for all E-Journals available on the Internet, nor will we always have access to all years of coverage, so it is possible you may encounter ‘Full text not available’ when viewing search result (see note below on unavailable resources).

Managing Browser Windows

When using our search tools (SCOPUS, WestLaw etc.) you may find you need to follow ‘Full text’, ‘PDF’ or similar links to open resources, browse journal contents or move from a results list to a full text document. Whilst moving away from individual Web sites, search results or search systems you may find these links open in a new Web browser window or Tab (within your Web browser), however some links will open the destination page or resource within the current Web browser window (e.g. where search results were located). You should become familiar with opening links in a new Web browser window or Tab to ensure your original Web page, search results or search system remains open in the background. For details on opening pages in a new Web browser window and other aspects of managing your computer desktop, see our help page on Using Web pages.

Note on Peer Reviewed status of E-Journals

Most search systems/ collections such as Discover provide an advanced search option to limit your search to Peer Reviewed journals only, these are journals which undertake a rigorous academic review process to ensure the quality of articles published. You can also often refine existing search results, e.g. in Discover you will see a ‘peer review’ tick box in the left menu of your results page. The SCOPUS system also provides only peer reviewed content when searching for journal articles.

Unavailable Resources

Please note, some of our search tools provide will non-subscribed content, however you can use the tools on our search pages to check if a particular E-Journal, article or E-Book are available. See our guide for help Finding Resources Unavailable via our Systems.

If you would like further guidance on searching please contact your Librarian.